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The Tip of an Iceberg
Traces of Chinese Buddhist Scrolls in Fragments of Tocharian Poṭhīs[*]

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Abstract:
This paper presents the results of a preliminary study shedding new light on a number of Tocharian fragments, which turn out to be composed of two physical layers with Chinese texts written inside. The hidden Chinese texts can be identified as parts of the Chinese translations of four Mahāyāna sūtras, namely the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (T.262), the *Ratnarāśi* (T.310[44]), the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (T.474), and the *Vimaladattāparipṛcchā* (T.310[33]).

Keywords:
Tocharian studies, Mahāyāna sūtras, early Chinese translations, multiple-text manuscripts.

When Emil Sieg (1866–1951) and Wilhelm Siegling (1880–1946) succeeded in deciphering the Indo-European language named Tocharian,[1] they worked primarily on tiny scraps of paper, excavated from the dry sands of Central Asia. Their attentions were focused, quite appropriately, on making sense of what they were able to read on these often mutilated and torn bits of manuscript, in the course of which they revealed what is now well known as the easternmost member of the Indo-European language family. It would therefore be no surprise were they to have been, as they probably were, unware that something else of great interest lay concealed beneath the Brāhmī letters that commanded their full attention. But in fact Sieg and Siegling well knew that some of the Tocharian fragments in the Berlin Turfan collection are not palimpsests, but rather are composed of two sheets of paper joined together,[2] and that

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[1] See Sieg and Siegling 1908.

[2] See, for example, the so-called *Araṇemi*-manuscript from Shorchuk (THT 71–106) and the *Karmavibhaṅga*-fragments from Siŋgim (THT 524–526). Both of them were described as written on folios

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a Chinese Buddhist scripture is, in some cases, written on the back of the Tocharian text.[3] The convergence of the two phenomena, doubled paper and Chinese text, albeit rare, does occur in the case of a few fragments whose delamination has unveiled their two-layered character, and the Chinese texts within.[4] Given the existence of these hidden texts, revealed by chance, it is worth exploring whether more vestiges of such two-layered manuscripts can be found among the Tocharian fragments that have not started to delaminate. The results of an initial investigation were surprising.

There are perhaps some reasons for these sources to have remained unexplored, for “the fragments were put between glass plates which were sealed with a special kind of adhesive strip”.[5] In other words, every fragment was treated in the same way as a resin-embedded specimen, which was granted longer durability at the cost of its three-dimensionality, and preventing direct access. To be sure, this is an otherwise effective method to protect the fragments from wear and tear; but when it comes to two-layered fragments of this nature, a significant facet of their materiality will never see the light of day, even if the collection in its entirety is preserved in good condition. With very few exceptions,[6] it is almost impossible to determine whether or not there are Chinese characters underneath, let alone to read them, as long as normal methods are used. But by the application of strong light, what was once hidden can become visible, and we have managed to read by eye most of the Chinese characters within a handful of Tocharian fragments, which are now more clearly visible in the transmitted-light photographs published below. Restoration of the Chinese characters has made possible the identification of textual remnants of four Chinese Buddhist scriptures, as well as the partial, hypothetical reconstruction of the original Chinese scrolls, from which the paper was cut for reuse (i.e., for the Tocharian poṭhīs).

The present paper presents our preliminary findings, which are divided into five sections, as follows:

1. The Tocharian fragments under investigation, the restored Chinese sides of the fragments, and the extant Chinese texts with their counterparts in the Taishō edition of

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composed of two layers glued together (“aus zwei aneinandergeklebten Lagen”); see Sieg and Siegling 1953, 11 and 328. This practice may have something to do with the use of the pen with a slanting tip to write all varieties of the Brāhmī script in the Tarim Basin from the 7th to the 9th century (Sander 1983, 121; 1985, 75–78, 86–87). It is conceivable that the slanting tip of this writing instrument, which is different from the Chinese brush, would have required a thicker paper. For a rare example of a bilingual *Saṃyuktāgama*-text in Sanskrit and Tocharian A (THT 993–999), written in a manuscript of Chinese-scroll format and with a brush, see Sieg and Siegling 1921, 199, *sub* No. 359–365.

[3] See, for example, a medical text from Yarkhoto (THT 500–502) written on the back of a manuscript of the *Daoxing banre jing* 道行般若經, Lokakṣema’s translation of the *Aṣṭāsāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (cf. T.224, 8.465c11–25), which is not collated in Karashima’s critical edition (the passage in question corresponds to Karashima 2011, 413–415). The Chinese side was noticed by Sieg and Siegling 1953, 311 (“auf die leere Seite einer chinesischen Rolle geschrieben”).

[4] This is the case with a hitherto unknown manuscript on Buddhist purification practices (*dhutaguṇa*), which has come down to us only in six fragments (THT 558–562). Each of the fragments seems to be one of the two layers of the Tocharian poṭhī, trimmed out of scrolls of at least two Chinese Buddhist scriptures, namely the *Shisong lü* 十誦律 (i.e., the *Sarvāstivādavinaya* translated by Kumārajīva et al. [T.1435]) and the *Shizhu jing* 十住經 (i.e., the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* translated by Kumārajīva [T.286]) – two copies of the latter are attested among the six fragments; see Chen 2019, 246–249.

[5] See Raschmann 1995.

[6] One such exception is THT 520 (i.e., 1552a), dealt with below, on both sides of which mirror images of Chinese characters are visible through the thin layer of paper. But this is not the case with the other Tocharian fragments in question.

the Chinese Buddhist canon, indicated;
2. Remarks on the palaeography and dating of the Chinese fragments;
3. Remarks on the significance of the retrieved textual evidence for the history of the four Chinese Buddhist scriptures under discussion;
4. Two variant Chinese readings and their text-critical implications; and
5. A reconstruction of the process of the metamorphosis from Chinese scroll to Tocharian poṭhī.

The present paper is rounded off by a brief prospect of future research, followed by the list of figures and an appendix which refers Tocharian specialists to composite photographs of the Tocharian fragments joined for the first time together according to the Chinese evidence.

1. Chinese Texts Retrieved

In this section, the fragments under investigation are treated in four groups:

1.1. THT 553 + 555 + 1588;
1.2. THT 552 + 554 + 2653;
1.3. THT 556 + 557;
1.4. THT 1552.[7]

The first three groups of fragments, discovered at the site of Kizil, Ming-öi, near Kucha, belong to a pocket-sized manuscript (6,8 × 10,5 cm) written in Tocharian B, which, according to Sieg and Siegling, consists of "two layers of paper cut from a Chinese scroll".[8] This may now be corrected by the evidence presented below, which demonstrates that paper sheets from at least three Chinese scrolls were used for the making of the Tocharian poṭhī. As far as can be gathered from its fragmentary state, the Tocharian 'pocket book' seems to deal with some doctrinal/devotional topics, such as the praise of the doors to deliverance (*vimokṣadvāra*), the praise of the Dharma, and the veneration of various Buddhist saints. The fourth group, excavated from the same site and unearthed in a cave nicknamed "Rothkuppelraum" by German scholars, contains parts of a manuscript of medium size with probably eight lines of writing on each side.[9] The majority of the remaining text is comprised of a hymn (*stotra*) to the Buddha in Tocharian B, possibly embedded in a drama whose plot is yet to be identified. Judging from their palaeographic features, these Tocharian texts were copied no earlier than the 8th century.[10] Their contents do not seem to relate to the Chinese texts within, which form the main object of research in the present paper.

1.1. THT 553 + 555 + 1588

Both THT 553 and 555 are, for the most part, one-layered and, at one time, formed part of two different Tocharian folios which have started to delaminate. Almost all the Chinese characters written on the preserved layer are thus disclosed (Fig. 1). The opposite layer, the lion’s share of which is ostensibly lost, has left traces on both of the fragments: On the one hand, there remains, around the partially preserved string-hole of THT 553, a small strip of the otherwise lost layer, from behind which several characters can be gleaned; on the other, faint mirror images of some ten characters are visible (and even partially legible) on the surface of THT 555. These traces are instrumental in locating five minute fragments subsumed under THT 1588 (Fig. 2), which can thus be identified, for the first time, as part of the layer opposite to THT 553 and 555 (henceforth 553’ and 555’, respectively): While THT 1588c belongs with the small strip near string-hole to THT 553’ (Figs. 3, 4), THT 555’ can be pieced together from the other four fragments, i.e., THT 1588a, b, d, and e, which are neatly complemented by the mirror images mentioned above (Fig. 6). The only exception is THT 1588f, which turns out to be a missing piece of THT 555 (Fig. 5).

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[7] Since this section is devoted to the study of the Chinese Buddhist texts, the serial numbers of the fragments henceforth refer to their Chinese sides (*eo ipso*, the *recto*).

[8] See Sieg and Siegling 1953, 347: "Die Nr. 552–557 gehören einer kleiner, sechszeiligen, in gewöhnlicher, unschöner Schrift geschriebenen Handschrift (Größe 6,8 × 10,5 cm) an, deren Blätter aus zwei Schichten bestehen, die aus einer chinesischen Rolle zurechtgeschnitten sind."

[9] See Sieg and Siegling 1953, 322: "Vielfach zusammengesetzter, rings beschädigter Rest einer wohl ursprünglich achtzeiligen Handschrift in alter Schrift." But actually no archaic-shaped *akṣara* is found in THT 520 (i.e., 1552a), see Malzahn 2007, 265.

[10] Tatsushi Tamai assigns all the fragments in question to the palaeographic category numbered II-3, which he dates to the time period 800–900 CE; see Tamai 2011, 298–299 and 371.

The preserved Chinese text reads as follows:[11]

THT 553’
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ [枷]鎖檢[繫] □ □ □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ [得解脱] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 商 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 子 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

THT 553
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ [大]身滿虛 □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ [忽]然在地入地[如] □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 令其父王 □ □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ [得未曾] □ □ □ □ □ □

THT 555 (+ 1588f)
□ □ □ □ □ □ [以]者[何] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ [雲]雷[音] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ 難得值如優 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ 宿福深厚生 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ 者何諸佛難 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ [人皆悉堪任] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

THT 555’ (1588a, b, d, e)
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ [端]政[12]有 □ □ □ □
□ □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ [福不唐]捐 □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ [盡意]若[有] □ □ □ □ □ □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 供[養飲食衣] □ □ □

Judging from their palaeography, the Chinese fragments of THT 553, 555, and 1588 apparently belong to the same manuscript. The preserved text is identified as part of the *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, i.e., the Chinese translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* by Kumārajīva (344–413):[13]

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[11] The following editorial symbols are used: [ ] = partially visible characters; □ = lost characters.

[12] 政 is used as a loan character for 正; see Wang Li 2000, 408, s.v. 政 1.ii.

[13] By and large the same passages are found in the *Tian pin Miaofa lianhua jing* 添品妙法蓮華經 (T.264),

Guanshiyin pusa pumen pin 觀世音菩薩普門品第二十五
(Chapter 24: *Samantamukhaparivarta*)
T.262, 9.56c21–26: 若有罪若無罪。杻械枷鎖檢繫其身。稱觀世音菩薩名者。皆悉斷壞即得解脫。若三千大千國土滿中怨賊。有一商主將諸商人。齎持重寶經過嶮路。其中一人作是唱言。諸善男子勿得恐怖。汝等。應當一心稱觀世音菩薩名號。
T.262, 9.57a07–15: 若有女人設欲求男。禮拜供養觀世音菩薩。便生福德智慧之男。設欲求女。便生端正有相之女。宿殖德本衆人愛敬。無盡意。禮拜觀世音菩薩。福不唐捐。是故衆生。皆應受持觀世音菩薩名號。無盡意。若有人受持六十二億恒河沙菩薩名字。復盡形供養飲食衣服臥具醫藥。於汝意云何。是善男子善女人功德多不。

Miao zhuangyan wang benshi pin 妙莊嚴王本事品第二十七
(Chapter 25: *Śubhavyūharājapūrvayogaparivarta*)
T.262, 9.60a07–12: 或現大身滿虛空中。而復現小小復現大。於空中滅忽然在地。入地如水履水如地。現如是等種種神變。令其父王心淨信解。時父見子神力如是。心大歡喜得未曾有。合掌向子言。汝等師為是誰。誰之弟子。
T.262, 9.60a26–b04: 母即告言。聽汝出家。所以者何。佛難値故。於是二子白父母言。善哉父母。願時往詣雲雷音宿王華智佛所親近供養。所以者何。佛難得値。如優曇鉢羅華。又如一眼之龜値浮木孔。而我等宿福深厚生値佛法。是故父母當聽我等令得出家。所以者何。諸佛難値時亦難遇。彼時妙莊嚴王。後宮八萬四千人。皆悉堪任受持是法華經。

1.2. THT 552 + 554 + 2653

Both THT 552 and 554 are two-layered Tocharian fragments cut out of one and the same Chinese scroll (Figs. 7, 8). The scroll originally consists of at least two sheets of paper in light of the junction of their edges near to the lower margin of THT 552 a. Since four textual strata, i.e., two external Tocharian sides and two internal Chinese sides, physically overlap with one another, it is quite difficult to disentangle the Chinese text from the superimposed layers. We have deciphered most of the Chinese characters in the original, but some of the characters are so blurred that not all their strokes can be reproduced with certainty. In the reconstruction of the Chinese sides (Figs. 9, 10), we have restored the clearly legible characters to their original forms, while substituting the rest with the same characters attested in other manuscripts. This reconstruction has made possible the identification of THT 2653, a minute triangular fragment which bears Chinese writing, as part of the sheet to which THT 552 b belongs (Fig. 11).

The Chinese text inside the Tocharian folios reads as follows:

THT 552 a
所敬者比丘□□□□□□□□□□□□
乹闥婆知其破□□□□□□□□□□□
旃陁羅迦葉如旃陁□□□□□□□□□
用物盡非好人之所[愛]□□□□□□□□

THT 552 b + 2653
尒所大海福[報]之分□□□□□葉是故[應]

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attributed to Jinagupta (528–605; Chavannes 1905, 332–356) and Dharmagupta (d. 619; Chavannes 1903, 439f.). This is essentially a new, enlarged recension of Kumārajīva's translation with other versions of this scripture collated; see Sasaki 1965, 34–60; 1970, 221–250. Its *terminus post quem* lies at the beginning of the 7th century; in other words, more than one hundred years later than the manuscript in question.

淨其心受他信施[迦] □ □ □ □ □ [尒時] □ □
有淨行欲離 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
而言世尊 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

THT 554 a
貴重心從施[主] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
毗尼為利養故 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
心常求利養迦葉 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

THT 554 b
丘得解脫者行善 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
觀一切行无常 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
滅願求欲得如 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
必能報是信 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

The preserved text is identified as part of the *Baoliangju hui* 寶梁聚會,[14] i.e., the Chinese translation of the *Ratnarāśi* included in the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection (T.310[44]), the compilation of which apparently postdates the present manuscript. This translation is traditionally attributed to a monk named Daogong 道龔, who was active in Liangzhou 涼州 (present-day Gansu) at the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th century.[15]

Shamen pin 沙門品第一 (Chapter 1: *Śramaṇa*)[16]
T.310, 11.640a20–b5: 若惡比丘受信施如一毛分。隨所受毛分。即損失施主爾所大海福報之分。不能畢報。迦葉。是故應淨其心受他信施。迦葉。應如是學。爾時。衆中有淨行少欲離扼[17]比丘二百人聞說是已捫淚而白[18]世尊。我今當死不欲以不得沙門果受他信施乃至一食。佛言。善哉。善哉。善男子。汝如是慚愧。畏於後世喩如金剛。即是現世瓔珞。善男子。我今當說世有二人應受信施。何等二。一者。勤行精進。二者。得解脫者。佛告。比丘。若有比丘得解脫者。行善法者。如我所說堅持戒者。觀一切行无常苦一切法無我者。觀涅槃寂滅。願求欲得。如是比丘。受他信施摶如須彌必能報是信施之福。若有比丘受信施主施令此施主得大利益得大果報。

Zhantuoluo pin 旃陀羅品第三 (Chapter 3: *Caṇḍāla*)
T.310, 11.641b17–28: [...] 所求得已生貴重心。從施主家受利養已不教施主佛法毘尼。為利養故親近在家。不為法故。亦無慈心常求利養。迦葉。是名沙門旃陀羅。迦葉。如旃陀羅為一切人之所捨離。所謂。大臣長者及諸小王剎利婆羅門并餘庶民乃至下賤之所遠離。不欲共作知識。迦葉。如是沙門旃陀羅。亦為一切所遠離。所謂。持戒有德人所敬者比丘比丘尼優婆塞優塞夷天龍鬼神及乾闥婆。知其破戒行惡法故。迦葉。是名沙門旃陀羅。迦葉。如旃陀羅所有衣服飲食諸所用物。盡非好人之所愛樂[19]。亦不受用。[...]

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[14] The character *hui* 會 'chapter' is justified only within the framework of the *Mahāratnakūṭa*, which did not come into being until 713 CE. The original title of this translation had been known to Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518) as *Baoliang jing* 寶梁經 'the *Ratnarāśi-sūtra*'; see T.2145, 55.11c6. This was probably also the title of the text copied in the manuscript, to which these fragments originally belonged.

[15] Next to nothing is known about Daogong. For an informed discussion of the varied, often dubious attribution of translations to him, see Silk 1994, 667–671.

[16] For a collated edition of the two passages, see Silk 1994, 565f. (= §I.13–15) and 578f. (= §III.1–3).

[17] For the problematic term *li'e* 離扼 as a rendering of Skt. *yogācāra*, see Silk 1997, 245–247.

[18] On the variation 言 : 白, see §4.1. below.

[19] The Tibetan counterpart of Chin. *aile* 愛樂 is *reg* 'touch' (*spṛś-*), hence the *Vorlage* of the Chinese translation seems to contain such a Middle Indic element as *phās-* or *phass-* 'to delight in, be pleased with' (cf. Pāli *phāsu* < **spārśu*; Turner 1973, 424f.); see Silk 1994, 306f., n. 4. This Middle Indic term and its various translations are also discussed *in extenso* by Haiyan Hu-von Hinüber in the present issue.

1.3. THT 556 + 557

In stark contrast to THT 552 and 554, THT 556 and 557 seem to have suffered severe damage, which resulted in loss of the vast majority of the Tocharian folios (Fig. 12). This renders the relative position of the preserved parts nebulous. Nevertheless, the partially preserved left margin of THT 556 seems to indicate that it is, in both cases, the part near the top margin of the Chinese sheet that has survived. It is thus not inconceivable that the retrieved Chinese characters (Figs. 13, 14) are located at the beginning of the individual lines in the original Chinese sheets.

The Chinese text inside the Tocharian folios reads as follows:

THT 556 a
是汝於何沒 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
爲女寧有沒 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

THT 556 b
[佛既]到[諸菩] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
諸大弟子釋 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
[問訊諸菩] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

THT 557 a
言善哉行矣 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
神足使 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

THT 557 b
[不云一切法化] □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □
非諸法耶 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

The preserved text is identified as part of the *Weimojie jing* 維摩詰經, i.e., the Chinese translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, traditionally attributed to Zhi Qian 支謙 (*fl.* 223–253):[20]

> *Pusa xing pin* 菩薩行品第十一
> (Chapter 10: *Kṣayākṣayo nāma dharmaprābhr̥taparivarta*)
> **T.474, 14.533a19–24**: 文殊師利言。善哉。行矣。宜知是時[21]。是時。維摩詰即如其象而為神足。使一切眾立其右掌。并諸師子座。共行詣佛。既到。諸菩薩皆避坐而下。稽首佛足。却住一面。諸大弟子。釋梵四天王。稽首佛足。皆住一面。於是。世尊問訊諸菩薩。使各復坐。
>
> *Jian Achu fo pin* 見阿閦佛品第十二
> (Chapter 11: *Abhiratilokadhātvānayanākṣobhyatathāgatadarśanaparivarta*)

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[20] The attribution of this translation is disputed. Nattier (2008, 139–141) is tempted to believe that it is a genuine work of Zhi Qian. Shi Guopu (1998, 217–252), however, argues that it was translated by Dharmarakṣa in 303 CE. Michael Radich has recently brought this issue back to the table by uncovering internal evidence that points to a more sophisticated state of affairs; see Radich 2019.

[21] This formulaic set phrase 'you know/think it is time' is widely attested in other classical Buddhist languages and is used to express a polite request for departure; cf. Skt. *yasyedānīṃ kālaṃ manyase* '[Go and attend to that] for which you think it is time'; Pāli *yassa dāni kālaṃ maññasi* 'id.'; Toch. B /// *saswe preke aiśträ* '... lord knows [it is] time' (PK NS 398 b2, cf. Skt. *yasyedānīṃ devaḥ kālaṃ manyate*; *pace* Pinault 1988, 182f.). For a syntactical clarification of this expression, see Wijesekera 1993, 184, §108a.

T.474, 14.534c13–18: 維摩詰曰。若無沒來何有諸法。曷云如是。汝於何沒而來生此。幻士造化。為男為女。寧有沒來。舍利弗言。化者。無沒生也。維摩詰曰。如來不云一切法化自然。答曰如是。曰化自然[22]相。非諸法耶。曷云如是。汝於何沒而來生此。

1.4. THT 1552 (incl. 520)

THT 520, which is now grouped together with four additional fragments under the new pressmark THT 1552, turns out to have belonged to a two-layered manuscript with Chinese characters written on the back of the Tocharian text (Fig. 15). We have deciphered most of the characters and thus ascertained the context of the surviving Chinese text. The four minute fragments, which must stem from the same manuscript, can thus be located and joined together on the basis of the relative position of the Chinese characters on the back (Fig. 16). The fact that the Chinese portions are taken from a scroll comprising at least two sheets of paper is evinced in the junction of their edges on THT 1552.1 b (= 520 b), detected as a vertical strip less transparent than the rest of the fragment. The junction of the edges, in this case, overlaps with the borderline between Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of a given text, as is indicated by the title of Chapter 5 written at the very beginning of the second sheet of paper.

The Chinese text inside the Tocharian folios reads as follows:

THT 1552.1 a (= 520 a) + 1552.2 (= 1552b–e), side α
自鳴无□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
連偏袒□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
我今南□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
人乃[有]如是[大]□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
告[目]連如々是々如汝所□□□從初[發意]乃至道場天□
所禮如佛塔廟是□□□□□佛无[上福]田於時□□
□□微咲諸佛常□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
玻離等種々色光照□□□□□□□□□□□□
宮日月精光皆不□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
難即從□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
天龍梵音□□□　□□□□□□□
□□瞋癡□□□　□□□□□□□

THT 1552.1 b (= 520 b)
□□大德□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
身也大德□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
言亦不以女身□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
身得阿耨多羅三藐□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□[23]
□□□第五[24]　尒時□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□无垢施菩[薩]□□□□□□□□□□□□
[成]就諸[願]佛告文殊□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
施菩[薩]曾於□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
无生法忍□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
供養八十□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

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[22] For the term *ziran* 自然 as a rendering of *svabhāva*, which seems to be peculiar to the translation idiom of Dharmarakṣa, see Karashima 1998, 613f., s.v. [自然](zìrán) ②.

[23] The seemingly excessive length of this line might be explained away on the assumption that the disyllabic word *puti* 菩提, which occurs twice, was written as a ligature such as 卄.

[24] These five characters were apparently written with reduced character spacing, presumably in order to highlight the title of the following chapter.

利若有 □

THT 1552.2 (= 1552b–e), side β[25]
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 世所難[信]然[能受] □
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 悅不[愛身命是]為[菩] □

The preserved text is identified as part of the *Wugoushi pusa yingbian hui* 無垢施菩薩應辯會,[26] a translation of the *Vimaladattāparipṛcchā* included in the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection (T.310[33]). This text was otherwise translated twice into Chinese, by Dharmarakṣa (in 289) and by Gautama Prajñāruci (*fl.* 539–542), respectively. The translation in question is attributed to Nie Daozhen 聶道真, who served as Dharmarakṣa's amanuensis on a number of translations.[27]

> **T.310, 11.562b20–24:** [...]無垢施女。若菩薩成就四法得善應辯。何謂為四。受持親近菩薩法藏。晝夜六時誦三陰經。諸佛菩提無生無滅。世所難信。然能受持讀誦。廣為他說令得喜悅。不愛身命。是為菩薩成就四法得善應辯。[...]

> **T.310, 11.563a16–b2**: [...] 百千天樂不鼓自鳴。無垢施女。即變女身成十六童子。時大德目連偏袒右肩右膝著地。合掌向佛而白佛言。世尊。我今面禮[28]諸佛菩薩。從初發意乃至道場。世尊。此女人乃有如是大威德神足力。能發大願。既發願已隨願皆成。佛告目連。如是如是。如汝所言。菩薩從初發意乃至道場。天人所禮如佛塔廟。是諸聲聞辟支佛无上福田。於時世尊。熙怡微笑。諸佛常法若微笑時。口中即出青黃赤白紫玻離等種種色光。照於無量無邊諸佛剎土。諸天魔宮日月精光皆不復明。還攝光明從頂上入。爾時大德阿難。即從坐起。更正衣服。偏袒右肩右膝著地。合掌向佛。以偈問曰
> 天龍梵音師子吼　　迦陵頻伽雷震聲
> 除貪瞋癡生喜悅　　願十力海說笑緣 [...]

> **T.310, 11.563c4–19**: 無垢施菩薩答目連言。世尊記大德。於神足人中最為第一。何為不轉男子身也。大德目連。即便默然。無垢施菩薩。謂大德目連言。亦不以女身得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。亦不以男身得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。所以者何。菩提無生。是以不可得
> 授記品第五
> 尒時文殊師利法王子白佛言。未曾有也。世尊。此無垢施菩薩。乃能善解甚深之法。以誓願力成就諸願。佛告文殊師利言。如是如是。如汝所言。此無垢施菩薩。曾於六十億佛所。修空三昧。於八十億佛所。修无生法忍。於三十億佛所。問甚深法。曾以衣服飲食。供養八十億諸佛。及問此分別辯印三昧。又文殊師利。若有善男子善女人。為菩提故。如恒河沙等諸佛剎土[...]

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[25] Yang Miao, with the perspicacity to see the blurred remnants of characters in the transmitted-light photograph, has first suggested the identification of the extremely fragmentary lines.

[26] Again, the character *hui* 會 'chapter' did not come into being until the compilation of the *Mahāratnakūṭa* in 713 CE, so the text copied in the present manuscript must have been categorised as a *jing* 經 'sūtra' (cf. *Wugoushi pusa fenbie yingbian jing* 無垢施菩薩分別應辯經; T.2145, 55.22c14).

[27] This attribution is not above suspicion, insofar as the title of this translation is listed in the *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 among 'anonymous translations' (*shiyi* 失譯; cf. T.2145, 55.21b17ff.). In other words, the information about its translator had been lost as early as the late 5th century. The fact that later catalogues credited Nie Daozhen with a number of translations, none of which are borne out by earlier records, calls into question the credibility of those attributions, although it cannot be excluded that Nie Daozhen did translate some Buddhist texts on his own; see Hayashiya 1941, 285–290.

[28] On the variation 面禮 : 南無, see §4.2. below.

2. Palaeography and Dating

Although no reference book comparable to Sander's 1968 treatise on the Brāhmī script[29] exists for Chinese palaeography, East Asian scholars, beginning with Fujieda Akira 藤枝晃 (1911–1998),[30] have made meritorious efforts to stratify and clarify the historical development of the palaeographic and codicological features of Chinese Buddhist manuscripts from Dunhuang and Turfan over the course of the first millennium of the Common Era.[31] In addition to manuscripts with dated colophons, which form the basis for a relative chronology, due attention has been paid to epigraphic evidence, since the so-called sūtra-copying style (*xiejing ti* 寫經體), adapted from the 'standard script' (*zhengshu* 正書), viz., the official writing style of the 3rd and 4th centuries,[32] bears a striking resemblance to the script of contemporaneous stone inscriptions (*mingshi shu* 銘石書).[33]

With regard to the Chinese Buddhist fragments from Turfan in particular, the major breakthrough also came from the work of Fujieda, who proposed a tripartite typology: 1. **Type A**: A transitional stage from Clerical Script (*lishu* 隸書) to Regular Script (*kaishu* 楷書), i.e., from the Northern dynasties to the kingdom of Kocho 高昌國 (327–640); 2. **Type C**:[34] The typical Tang 唐 style (640–866); 3. **Type D**: A style written under the West Uyghur kingdom (866–1275).[35] Subsequently, he divided the first of the three types further into three subtypes, as follows: 1. **Type AA**: An earlier stage of the Northern dynasties period style (327–460); 2. **Type A**: A later stage of the Northern dynasties period style (460–550); 3. **Type A'**: A style written under the kingdom of Kocho (460–640).[36]

Albeit not unproblematic in all respects,[37] Fujieda's typology has proven a helpful heuristic device to describe how Chinese Buddhist manuscripts from Turfan evolved over time, and has been verified, followed, and developed by other scholars in this field.[38]

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[29] See *Paläographisches zu den Sanskrithandschriften der Berliner Turfansammlung* (= Sander 1968). As far as the Tocharian Brāhmī script is concerned, one must also consult *Paläographische Untersuchungen zum B-Tocharischen* (= Tamai 2011).

[30] See Fujieda 1960, 1–40; 1962, 1–36; 1969, 17–39; 1985, 325–328; 1987, 3–36; and 1989, 325–329.

[31] For relevant publications by Fujieda's compatriots, see Nakamura 1927; Nishikawa 1991a; 1991b, 170–183; and Itō 1992, 145–227. For more recent contributions by Chinese scholars, see Shi Anchang 1985, 58–66; 1988, 66–71; Wang Su et al. 1992, 1–14; Zhao Shengliang 1991, 43–49; 1995, 1–9; Wang Zhenfen 2006, 17–29; Tsui Chung-hui 2020; and Shi Rui 2019, 63–87. For codicological research into the paper of Chinese manuscripts, see Pan Jixing 1966, 39–47, whose work has been rectified and complemented by European scholars, such as Drège 1981, 305–360 and Helman-Ważny 2016, 127–140.

[32] See Tsui 2020, 3–21.

[33] See Hua Rende 2000, 284–297; and Shi Anchang 2017, 58. The affinities between the two writing styles probably result from the socio-religious prestige accorded to those Buddhist scriptures, which were venerated as the sacred Word of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*), and thus committed to writing in such a way as to create an aura of antiquity and solemnity; see Shi 2019, 84f.

[34] It might seem a bit odd that Type A is not followed by Type B, but by Type C. This ostensible oddity is due to the fact that Fujieda subsumed under Type B southern Chinese styles and the Sui 隋 style, which are generally missing from Turfan; see Fujieda 1989, 329.

[35] See Fujieda 1987, 3–36; and 2005, 7.

[36] See Fujieda 1989, 325–329.

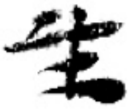
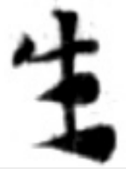
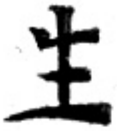
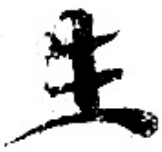
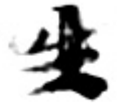
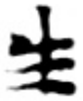
[37] One may be sceptical about the cogency of synchronizing the evolution of palaeographic-codicological types with dynastic changes. To steer clear of this problem would entail much more detailed investigations, and might in any case not be possible given the inherent fluidity of writing styles.

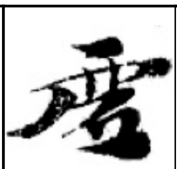
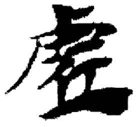
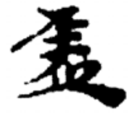
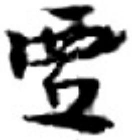
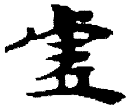
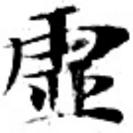
[38] For a virtually identical palaeographic typology, see Kudara 2003, 2–11; see also Mitani 2018, iii. Faithfully following Fujieda, Mitani divides Type C into three subtypes in light of the diversity within the so-called typical Tang style. A tripartite subdivision of Type AA is likewise attempted by Tsui (2020, 57–84) on the basis of her scrupulous study of the Northern Liang style. Most recently, Shi (2019, 73–84) adheres, once again, to Fujieda's typology in his survey of Chinese Buddhist fragments preserved at the Lüshun Museum, which, at

Therefore, it is, to our mind, not imprudent to adopt this as a working hypothesis in the present survey. Since a systematic palaeographic study would go beyond the scope of this paper, we content ourselves with a preliminary overview of the Chinese characters. For each of the four manuscripts, two or three sample characters are selected, with each presented in a synoptic table with examples of the same character taken from other Chinese Buddhist manuscripts, which are dated and/or categorised after Fujieda's typology.[39] This enables the reader to have a direct view of the types of writing styles to which the manuscripts have the nearest affinity. All the sample characters, as is demonstrated below, find their closest analogues in manuscripts subsumed under **Type AA** or **A**. This offers circumstantial evidence for the dating of the four manuscripts. In light of the dates of the individual translations in question, it may not be wide of the mark to propose the following approximate dates:[40]

2.1. THT 553 + 555 + 1588 (**Type AA**): 406–460 CE;
2.2. THT 552 + 554 + 2653 (**Type AA** or **A**): 400–550 CE;
2.3. THT 556 + 557 (**Type AA**): 327–460 CE;
2.4. THT 1552 (**Type AA** or **A**): 327–550 CE.

2.1. THT 553 + 555 + 1588: *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* tr. Kumārajīva

生 *shēng*						
No./ Findspot	THT 555/ Kizil	Ch 1027/ Toyuk	Ch 294/ Toyuk	Ch 452/ Toyuk	Ch 5533/ Toyuk	Ch 5510/ Kocho
Type	AA	AA	AA	A	A' or C	C

虛 *xū*						
No./ Findspot	THT 553/ Kizil	Gan-Bo 001/ unknown	Gan-Bo 003/ unknown	Ch/U 8130/ unknown	Dun-Bo 072/ Dunhuang	Ch 161/ Toyuk
Type	AA	AA (ca. 370)	AA	AA	A	C

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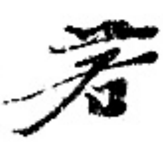
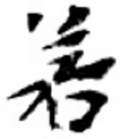
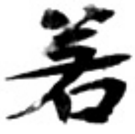
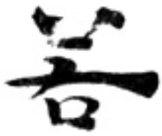
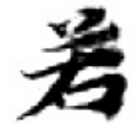
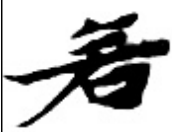
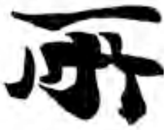
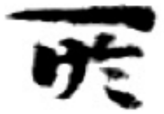
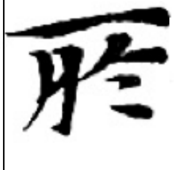
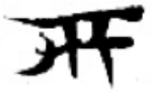
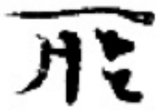
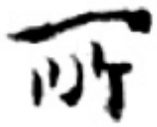
one time, formed part of the Ōtani collection.

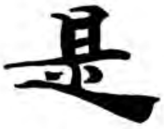
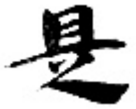
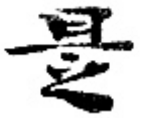
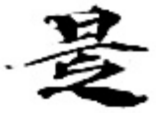
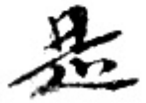
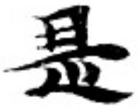
[39] Some of the sample characters are taken from the *Dunhuang suzi dian* (= Huang 2005).

[40] It goes without saying that the tentative dates reached in this section must be used with caution and tested against additional evidence.

若 *ruò*						
No./ Findspot	THT 1588/ Kizil	*Zufu* II.4/ Kucha	*Zufu* II.9/ Kocho	*Zufu* II.6/ Kucha	S. 81[41]/ Dunhuang	*Zufu* II.Ap.1/ Kocho
Type	AA	AA (d. 411)	AA or A	AA or A	A (d. 506)	A’ (d. 593)

2.2. THT 552 + 554 + 2653: *Ratnarāśi* tr. Daogong

所 *suǒ*						
No./ Findspot	THT 552/ Kizil	Shang-Bo 01/ Dunhuang	P. ch. 3006/ Dunhuang	Ch 1251/ Toyuk	Ch 154/ Toyuk	Ch 1015/ Toyuk
Type	AA or A	AA (d. 393)	AA (359–406)[42]	AA	A	A

是 *shì*						
No./ Findspot	THT 554/ Kizil	*Zufu* II.1[43]/ Toyuk	Ch 294/ Toyuk	Ch 1826/ Toyuk	Ch 2600/ Toyuk	Ch 1257/ Murtuq
Type	AA or A	AA (d. 296)	AA	A	A or A’	A’ or C

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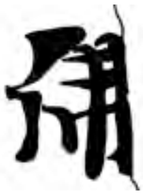
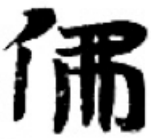
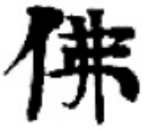
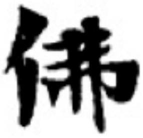
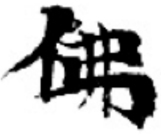
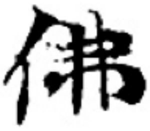
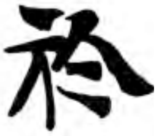
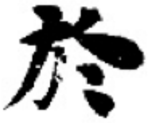
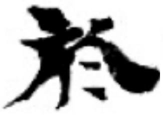
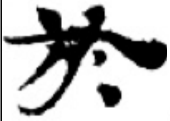
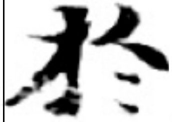
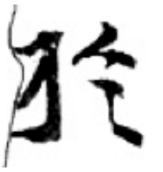
[41] This manuscript, copied in Jingzhou 荊州 (present-day Hubei), is representative of the Regular Script prevailing in the Southern dynasties; see Fujieda 1962, 3; and Zhao 1991, 43.

[42] For the approximate dates of this manuscript, see Shi Guopu 1998, 79–91.

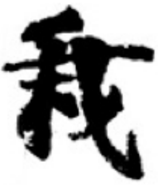
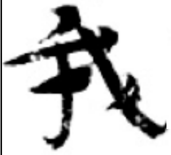
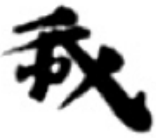
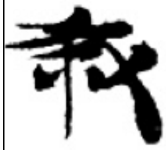
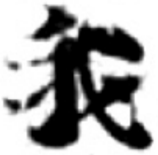
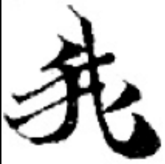
[43] This manuscript unearthed in Toyuk (Turfan) is by far the oldest Chinese Buddhist manuscript known to date, endowed with a colophon with a date equivalent to 296 CE. In stark contrast to its great antiquity, the palaeography of this manuscript seems to be quite progressive, representing “more of a contemporary style than an archaic one”; see most recently Wang 2006, 17–29; and Tsui 2020, 9–14. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that some characters attested therein exhibit affinity to Type A, even though the manuscript predates at least by decades all the manuscripts categorized by Fujieda as Type AA. This should hint that any such typologies should be taken *cum grano salis*. For the synchronic distinction between a refined and a utilitarian handwriting style in early Chinese manuscripts, which is not to be attributed to a diachronic evolution over time, see Boltz 2012/13, 11–18.

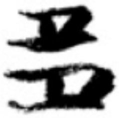
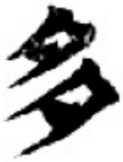
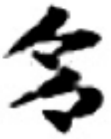
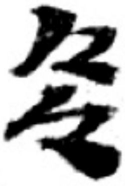
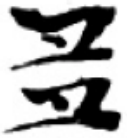
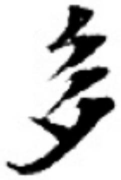
2.3. THT 556 + 557: *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* tr. Zhi Qian

佛 ***fó***						
No./ Findspot	THT 556/ Kizil	*Zufu* II.1/ Toyuk	Ch 294/ Toyuk	Ch 3012/ Toyuk	Ch 415/ Kocho	Ch 1826/ Toyuk
Type	AA	AA (d. 296)	AA	AA	AA	A

於 ***yú***						
No./ Findspot	THT 556/ Kizil	*Zufu* II.1/ Toyuk	Ch 415/ Kocho	Ch 392/ Toyuk	Ch 1826/ Toyuk	Ch 1390/ Toyuk
Type	AA	AA (d. 296)	AA	AA	A	A’ or C

2.4. THT 1552: *Vimaladattāparipr̥cchā* tr. Nie Daozhen

我 ***wǒ***						
No./ Findspot	THT 520/ Kizil	*Zufu* II.1/ Toyuk	Ch 5505/ unknown	Ch 392/ Toyuk	Ch 1826/ Toyuk	Ch 1289/ Toyuk
Type	AA or A	AA (d. 296)	AA	AA	A	A or A’

多 ***duō***						
No./ Findspot	THT 520/ Kizil	*Zufu* II.1/ Toyuk	Ch 1012/ unknown	Ch 1535/ Kocho	Ch 2202/ unknown	Ch 1257/ Murtuq
Type	AA or A	AA (d. 296)	AA	AA	A	A’ or C

3. Historical Significance

As is argued in the preceding section, these fragments, in the first place, formed part of four Chinese Buddhist manuscripts, produced at some point between the early 4th and the mid-6th centuries. If this preliminary dating is approximately correct, we have to do here with (one of) the earliest extant textual witness(es) to each of the four aforementioned scriptures. Their significance can thus hardly be overestimated. To bring home to the reader how important these tiny scraps of paper are, it is necessary to contextualise them against the broader backdrop of Chinese Buddhist manuscripts discovered in Turfan and Dunhuang.[44]

The preserved parts of Kumārajīva's translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (T.262, 9.56c21–57a14, and 60a08–b04) are, as is to be expected given the great popularity of the text, testified to by numerous fragments and manuscripts; the vast majority of them, however, are classified as **Type C** or **D** and thus were copied no earlier than 640 CE, i.e., after the Turfan region came under the hegemony of the Tang Empire. THT 553, 555, and 1588 thus count among the earliest fragments of this translation, which seems to have reached the Tarim Basin as early as the first half of the 5th century.[45]

The preserved parts of the Chinese translation of the *Ratnarāśi*[46] (T.310[44], 11.640a20–b05, 641b17–28) are otherwise attested in two Dunhuang manuscripts, i.e., BD5426 and Ōtani 707.[47] The former belongs with Or.8210/S.5664 and Zhejiang 浙江 158[48] to a Tang concertina, which has approximately 35 characters per line and exemplifies **Type C** in terms of its palaeography. The latter, to which a colophon with a date equivalent to 533 CE is attached, constitutes the main part of a manuscript in standard format (17 characters per line), out of which three small fragments preserved in the Chinese National Library (i.e., BD16189A–C) are trimmed. In the case of Ōtani 707, it is noteworthy that there is an error in the dating formula of the colophon,[49] and that the relation between the manuscript and the colophon is questionable.[50] That is not to say that the manuscript *per se* is a forgery in any sense, but rather that the dating of the manuscript to the early 6th century is based on meagre evidence. Therefore, THT 552, 554, and 2653 may well be the oldest known witness of the passages in question. Among the manuscripts unearthed from the Turfan region, there are 12 fragments that have been identified so far as parts of this text.[51] Palaeographically almost all the fragments belong to **Type C** and thus date back to the Tang dynasty, with the sole exception of Ch 2186, a tiny fragment which testifies to a writing style classified as **Type A** and is approximately contemporaneous with the fragments from Kucha. Together they cast light on the earliest stage of the *Ratnarāśi* insofar as that can be traced materially.

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[44] In the present survey, the following catalogues are consulted: For the Berlin Turfan manuscripts, see *Katalog chinesischer buddhistischer Textfragmente* I (= Schmitt and Thilo 1975) and II (= Thilo 1985), *Chinese Buddhist Texts from the Berlin Turfan Collections* III (= Kudara 2005); for the Dunhuang manuscripts, see *A Concordance to the Taishō Canon and Dunhuang Buddhist Manuscripts* (3rd [provisional] edition, 2015); for a comprehensive list of the manuscripts of the Ōtani and Berlin Turfan collections: *A Catalogue of Chinese Buddhist Fragments Collected by Ōtani and German Turfan Expedition* (= Mitani 2018).

[45] There are 25 examples of Type AA among the fragments and manuscripts of the *Lotus Sūtra* in the Berlin Turfan collection, mostly excavated in Kocho and Toyuk; cf. Ch 132, 294, 392, 415, 647, 777, 1251, 1329, 1367, 1409, 1484, 1535, 1572, 2913, 2965, 3012, 3405, 3845, 5505, Ch/U 6136, 6333, 6504, 8130, Mainz 735, 737. In addition, 40 examples of Type AA, whose findspots are unknown, are excavated by the Ōtani expedition, and now preserved at the Lüshun Museum and in the Deguchi collection; cf. LM20_1452_35_01, 1455_08_10, 1455_24_17, 1455_33_05, 1455_36_04, 1456_32_17, 1457_16_01, 1458_25_01, 1460_22_05, 1461_15_09, 1461_23_14, 1461_32_07, 1461_36_10, 1463_27_04, 1463_30_09, 1465_17_03, 1466_16_01, 1476_17_02, 1476_21_02, 1476_24_01, 1493_29_05, 1493_36_02, 1494_09_04, 1495_05_05, 1496_32_03, 1498_22_01, 1498_24_03, 1501_26_01, 1505_685*, 1506_775*, 1506_871*, 1506_971, 1508_1318, 1508_1332*, 1510_1679, 1511_084, 1517_146, 1548_37, and KZ_00103, 00107. In Kucha and Kizil, the Ōtani expedition also brought to light four fragments of the *Lotus Sūtra* which exemplify the same type, and two of those fragments are dated 411; see *Zufu* II.4–8.

[46] As regards the extant manuscripts of the Chinese *Ratnarāśi*, we are greatly indebted to an unpublished list compiled by Jonathan Silk. Given that Silk's *Ratnarāśi* project is still in progress, we must keep in mind the strong likelihood that more fragments of this text will come to light in the future, and that the information presented in this paragraph is provisional at best.

[47] The first preserved part is partially (T.310, 11.640a20–23) attested in Pelliot chinois 3348 (towards the end of the *recto*), which contains excerpts from the *Mahāratnakūṭa* from *juan* 82 through *juan* 113 (Soymié 1983, 281). The *Mahāratnakūṭa* was compiled by Bodhiruci in 713 CE, and secular documents written on the *verso* of this manuscript are dated 744/5 CE. Therefore, the excerpts were in all likelihood produced at some point between 713 and 744 CE.

[48] See Huang and Zhang 2012, 556–557 and 218 (plate).

The earliest extant Chinese translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (T.474), whether by Zhi Qian or not, is overshadowed by Kumārajīva's translation in terms of popularity. Only four fragments of T.474 from Dunhuang have been identified so far,[52] and two intriguing fragments unearthed in the Turfan region can be identified either as T.474 or as a commentary on it.[53] All the six fragments are palaeographically classified as **Type AA** or **A**, and thus predate the mid-6th century. Adding to the mere handful of *testimonia*, THT 556 and 557, which contain bits of the text (T.474, 14.533a19–24, 534c13–18) otherwise unattested in any manuscript, bear invaluable witness to a time when this version of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* had not yet fallen out of favour.

The translation of the *Vimaladattāparipr̥cchā* does not seem to have enjoyed much popularity, inasmuch as merely six fragments have been identified so far. Hence it comes as no surprise that the preserved parts (T.310[33], 11.563a16–b2, c4–19) are not testified to by any manuscript evidence from Dunhuang or Turfan. The extant fragments were mostly copied under the Tang dynasty, and only two fragments housed at the Lüshun Museum[54] are classified as **Type A** and thus likely to have originated in the pre-Tang period. This also holds true for the present fragments, which seem to have once belonged to a manuscript of **Type AA** or **A** and may hark back to an even earlier stage of the text's long history.

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[49] For an English translation of the colophon, see Silk 1994, 655f. The colophon is dated to 永熙二年歲次壬子四月八日 "on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, in the second year of the Yongxi period, the year of *renzi*". While the Yongxi period must be identified with the third regnal period of Emperor Xiaowu 孝武帝 of the Northern Wei (i.e., 532–534 CE), the second year of this period was the year of *guichou* 癸丑 rather than *renzi* 壬子 in the Chinese sexagenary cycle; see Silk 1994, 656.

[50] Fujieda Akira (*apud* Silk 1994, 656) cast doubt on the authenticity of this manuscript, which, according to him, "is undoubtedly of recent manufacture". Jonathan Silk (p.c.) has voiced his grave doubts about Fujieda's scepticism in this specific case; for him there is no good reason to regard this manuscript as 'fake' in any meaningful way.

[51] See Mitani 2018, 349f. Amongst them, 7 fragments are preserved in Berlin: Ch 2186, 3743d (T II D 351), Ch/U 6923, 7520, 8003, 8090, 8154 (the last 5 fragments seem to have originally belonged to the same manuscript and there is a Uighur text written on the back), and 5 fragments kept at the Lüshun Museum: LM20_1464_08_07, 1496_24_02, 1500_30_01, 1501_22_04, 1519_09_13.

[52] Two of the four fragments are preserved in St. Petersburg (i.e., Дх2111 and 193B) and have not yet received due treatment. Among the other two fragments remaining in China (i.e., Shang-Bo 上博 01 and Dun-Yan 敦研 08), the one kept at the Shanghai Museum, endowed with a colophon dated 393 CE, is the oldest fragment among this group. For a study of Shang-Bo 01, see Sun Chi-wen 2008, 103–135.

[53] A Turfan fragment containing 35 lines of text was identified by Nakamura Fusetsu as "a different translation of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*" (*iyaku Yuimakyō* 異訳維摩経), which may be identical to T.474; see Nakamura 1927, 40. A fragment of a hitherto unknown Buddhist text with annotations, found by the Ōtani expedition, seems to contain a quotation from T.474; see Inokuchi 1980, pl. 28, line 10 (cf. T.474, 14.523c20f.). For a brief summary of the various sources, see Shi 1998, 56, n. 61.

[54] These are assigned the shelf numbers: LM20_1500_17_03, and 1506_854*. The other four fragments date from the Tang period (7th–8th cent.); cf. Дх4361, S.5665[4-19], Ch 3216, and no. 59 in the collection of Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage (see Hao 2011, 50).

4. Two Variant Readings

4.1. A Variant Reading in the *Ratnarāśi*

THT 552 b testifies to an intriguing variant reading in comparison with almost all other versions of the Chinese *Ratnarāśi*:

> 比丘二百人聞説是已捫淚而言。世尊。我今當死[...]
> Two hundred monks … [wept while] hearing this [teaching] preached, and they, shedding tears, **said**, 'Lord, we now would rather die …'
> 比丘二百人聞説是已捫淚而**白**世尊。我今當死[...] (T.310[44], 11.640a24f.)
> Two hundred monks … [wept while] hearing this [teaching] preached, and they, shedding tears, **spoke to** the Lord, 'We now would rather die …'

The variant reading is otherwise corroborated by the stone inscription of the same text at the site of Fangshan 房山 near Beijing, the carving of which took place in 1055–1056.[55] It is thus not far-fetched to presume that this reading was also attested in the Khitan edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon, with which the Fangshan inscriptions show some affinities.[56]

The Sanskrit counterpart of this passage has fortunately come down to us, thanks to a quotation in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* by Śāntideva (7th–8th cent.):[57]

> *bhikṣūṇāṃ dve śate imaṃ dharmaparyāyaṃ śrutvā prarudite* | ***evaṃ ca vācam abhāṣanta*** | *kālaṃ vayaṃ bhagavan kariṣyāmo* | [...]
> [T]wo hundred monks wept when they heard this Dharma discourse, and they **said**, 'Lord, we may die ...'

By and large the same reading is attested in the Tibetan translation of the *Ratnarāśi*, which does not have the Buddha addressed in direct speech at all:[58]

> *dge slong nyis brgyas bstan pa 'di thos nas rab tu ngus te mchi ma zag cing* ***tshig 'di skad ces*** *bdag cag ni gum yang rung ste* […] ***zhes smras so*** //
> Two hundred monks hearing this teaching wept, and the tears flowing they **said**, 'Even though we may die …'

The Chinese term *shìzūn* 世尊 usually functions as a vocative, translating Skt. *bhagavan* 'Lord,' while *fó* 佛 'Buddha' is seldom used as a vocative. The verb *bái* 白 'to address, speak to' is always followed by an object, while *yán* 言 'to say' requires no object, but often introduces direct speech beginning with a vocative. From the perspective of syntax, it seems more natural to construe *bái* with *fó* ('to speak to the Buddha') and *yán* with *shìzūn* ('to say, 'Lord, ...'').

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[55] See *Fangshan Yunjusi shijing* (= Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 1978), vol. 8, 602. This text was carved as part of the whole *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection which, in its entirely, consists of 360 plaques of stone carved from 1042–1056; see Vaudescal 1914, 387; and Silk 1994, 660. For the sūtra-carving project at the site of Fangshan in general, see Ledderose 1992, 15–33; 2004, 381–454; and 2006, 319–329.

[56] For the genealogical relation between the Khitan and Fangshan editions, whose hyparchetype, according to some scholars, might be traced back to an official Tang canon, see Zacchetti 2005, 95–109, 133.

[57] For the Sanskrit text see Bendall 1897–1902: 137, translated by Goodman 2016, 133.

[58] The Tibetan text and English translation are after Silk 1994, 407 and 286.

4.2. A Variant Reading in the *Vimaladattāparipṛcchā*

In light of three characters preserved in THT 1552, there is a strong likelihood that the hitherto oldest manuscript of the *Vimaladattāparipṛcchā* also contains a variant reading in comparison with the version canonised by the Taishō editors, a reading which it shares with four other editions:

> 世尊。我今**南无**諸佛菩薩。從初發意乃至道場。[...]
> Lord, now I **pay homage** (***namo***) to all the Buddhas' Bodhisattvas, beginning from [their] generation of the initial resolve [to become a Buddha] up to [their arrival at] the seat of awakening …
> 世尊。我今**面禮**[59]諸佛菩薩。從初發意乃至道場。[...] (T.310[33], 11.563a19)
> Lord, now I **venerate** all the Buddhas' Bodhisattvas **with the [head and] face,** beginning from [their] generation of the initial resolve [to become a Buddha] up to [their arrival at] the seat of awakening ...

Dharmarakṣa (late 3rd cent.) and Gautama Prajñāruci (mid-6th cent.) translated the same sentence, which was put in the mouth of Maudgalyāyana, as follows:

> 從今已往歸諸菩薩及初發意。爲之**作禮**。謙遜順教。至成佛道。(T.338, 12.96a29–b01)
> From now on, I take refuge in all Bodhisattvas and those who have generated the initial resolve [to become a Buddha]. I **venerate** them, and humbly follow [their] teaching, until they attain Buddhahood.
> 世尊。如我**意解**菩薩。從初發心乃至道場 [...] (T.339, 12.105c28–29)
> Lord, as I **mentally comprehend** Bodhisattvas, beginning from [their] generation of the initial resolve [to become a Buddha] up to [their arrival at] the seat of awakening ...

While Dharmarakṣa's rendition is quite ambivalent and can be interpreted either way, its counterpart in the 6th-century Chinese translation (*yìjiě* 意解 'to mentally comprehend') seems to indicate an underlying verb form such as **manas*(*i*)*kar-,* 'to concentrate the mind on, reflect (intently) on', which can easily be derived from **namaskar*- 'to pay homage to' through a metathesis of the nasal consonants. If this scenario is not quite far-fetched, one may further hypothesise that **namaskar*- is precisely the Indic counterpart of the verb in question. This hypothesis does not fall afoul of the Tibetan version of the *Vimaladattāparipṛcchā*:[60]

> *bcom ldan 'das dang po sems bskyed pa nas bzung ste / byang chub kyi snying po la gnas pa'i bar gyi byang chub sems dpa' la* ***phyag 'tshal lo*** *//*
> Lord, I **pay homage** to a Bodhisattva, beginning from [his] generation of the initial resolve [to become a Buddha] up to [his] presence at the seat of awakening.

The term *phyag 'tshal* as a rendering of Skt. **namaskar*- is common.[61] The Tibetan version, in all likelihood, lends support to the variant reading attested in THT 1552, insofar as it does not mention anything obviously relevant to the act of touching the feet of Bodhisattvas with the head or face, as the alternate reading *miànlǐ* 面禮 implies.[62]

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[59] The variant reading *namo* 南無 is attested in the Yuan, Ming, Kunaichō 宮内庁 editions as well as the Fangshan edition carved in the mid-11th century, which was not collated by the Taishō editors. See *Fangshan Yunjusi shijing* (= Zhongguo fojiao xiehui 1978), vol. 8, 543.

[60] The Tibetan text is after the Peking edition of the Kanjur (= Suzuki 1955–1961), dKon brtsegs, *zi* 272a2.

[61] See Negi 1993–2005, s.v. *phyag 'tshal* (~ Skt. *praṇam*-, *namaskar*-, *vand*- etc.).

5. From Chinese Scroll to Tocharian Poṭhī

The process of metamorphosis from Chinese scroll to Tocharian poṭhī mainly consists of two steps: Tocharian folios are usually smaller in size than Chinese sheets, so the latter must be somehow trimmed or cut to size. What is more, pairs of Chinese sheets, or parts thereof, must be somehow laminated, to produce the two-layered Tocharian folios. How and in what sequence these two steps were taken are the key to the mechanisms for producing Tocharian folios of this nature, and the identification of the Chinese Buddhist scriptures proved absolutely instrumental in our discovery of the mechanisms. That is to say, since the relative position of the groups of Chinese characters in their original context is now known, we obtained clues about the original size and structure of the physical substrates of the two-layered fragments. To be sure, the reconstructed layout of the Chinese sheets, presented below, is hypothetical, insofar as Chinese Buddhist scrolls dating from the given time period vary greatly in the number of characters per line, number of lines per sheet, etc. But given the overall stability of the contents of the Chinese texts, which while perhaps varying slightly is in general very consistent, we have a rather high degree of confidence in our ability to reconstruct the overall shape of the original Chinese manuscripts.

5.1. THT 553 + 555 + 1588

In the case of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*-manuscript, the preserved parts are located near the beginning of Chapter 25 and Chapter 27, respectively (Chart 1). In terms of the construction of the physical substrate upon which the Tocharian text was to be written, and given that the Chinese characters inside the same Tocharian folio physically overlap, one of the two sheets was flipped over vertically and glued onto the other. Thereafter, the two-layered paper was cut in half twice horizontally, while the reduced quarter was cut vertically into equal-sized rounded rectangular pieces measuring about 10,5 cm in length.

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[62] The term *mianli* is rarely attested in isolation. In most cases, it is embedded in the set phrase 頭面禮足 'to venerate one's feet with the head and face', translating Skt. *pādau śirasā/śirobhir vand-* 'to venerate one's feet with the head(s)'. Although *vand-* is also rendered as *phyag 'tshal* in Tibetan, it is almost always preceded by *zhabs la mgo pos* in this set phrase.

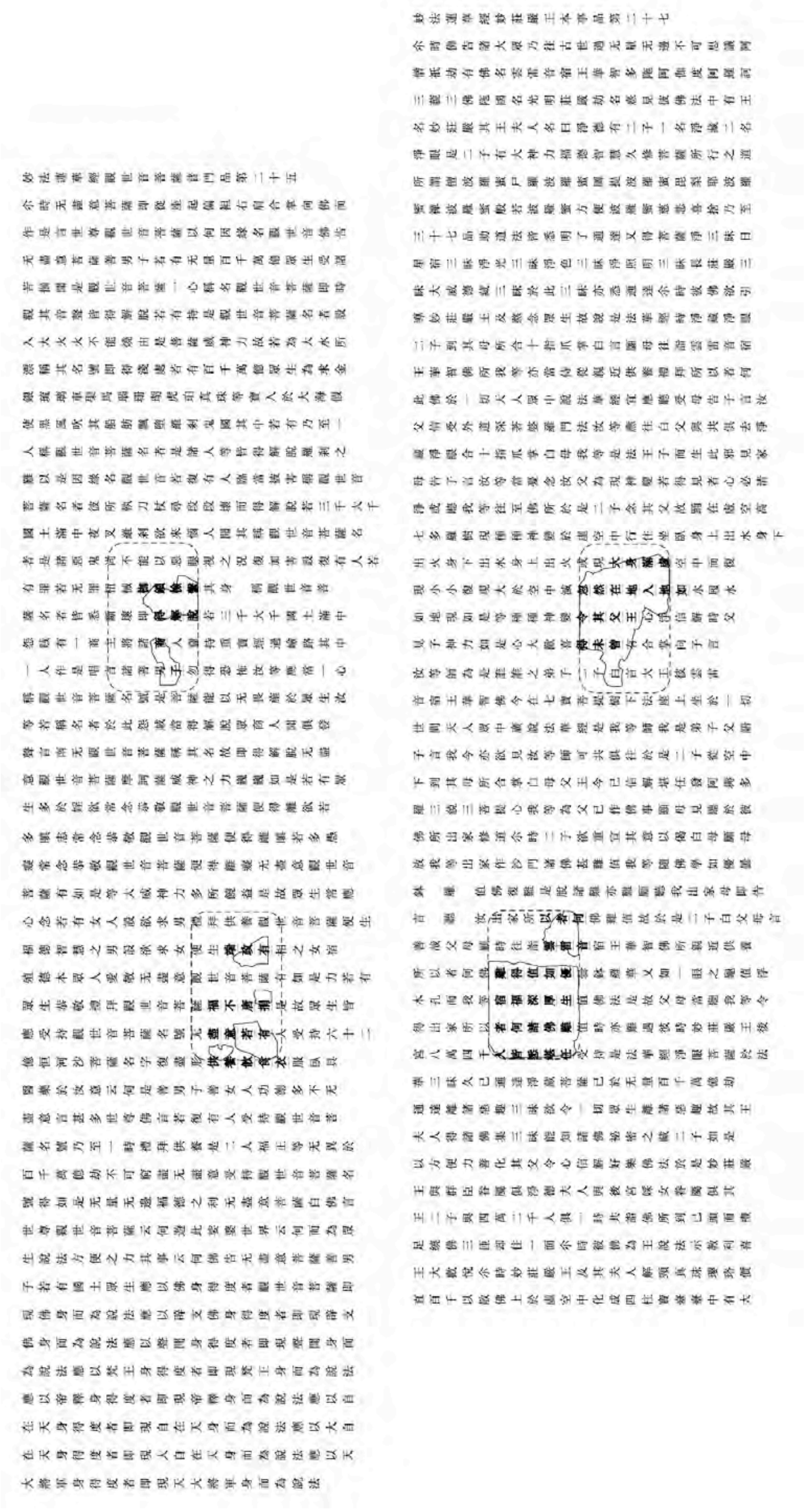
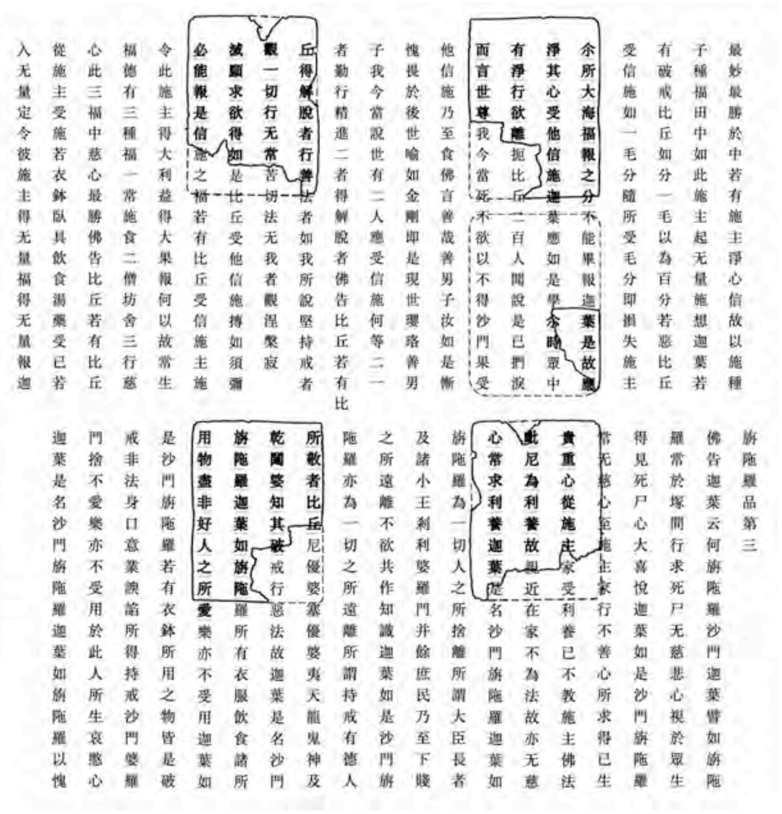


Chart 1: Reconstructed layout of the Chinese scroll of THT 553 + 555 + 1588

5.2. THT 552 + 554


最妙最勝於中若有施主淨心信故以施種
子種福田中如此施主起无量施想迦葉若
有破戒比丘如分一毛以為百分若惡比丘
受信施如一毛分隨所受毛分即損失施主
尒所大海福報之分不能畢報迦葉是故應
淨其心受他信施迦葉應如是學尒時眾中
有淨行欲離扼比丘二百人聞說是已抆淚
而言世尊我今當死不欲以不得沙門果受
他信施乃至食佛言善哉善男子汝如是慚
愧畏於後世喻如金剛即是現世瓔珞善男
子我今當說世有二人應受信施何等二一
者勤行精進二者得解脫者佛告比丘若有比
丘得解脫者行善法者如我所說堅持戒者
觀一切行无常苦切法无我者觀涅槃寂
滅願求欲得如是比丘受他信施摶如須彌
必能報是信施之福若有比丘受信施主施
令此施主得大利益得大果報何以故常生
福德有三種福一常施食二僧坊舍三行慈
心此三福中慈心最勝佛告比丘若有比丘
從施主受施若衣鉢臥具飲食湯藥受已若
入无量定令彼施主得无量福得无量報迦

旃陀羅品第三
佛告迦葉云何旃陀羅沙門迦葉譬如旃陀
羅常於塚間行求死尸无慈悲心視於眾生
得見死尸心大喜悅迦葉如是沙門旃陀羅
常无慈心至施主家行不善心所求得已生
貪重心從施主家受利養已不教施主佛法
貳尼為利養故親近在家不為法故亦无慈
心常求利養迦葉是名沙門旃陀羅迦葉如
旃陀羅為一切人之所捨離所謂大臣長者
及諸小王剎利婆羅門并餘庶民乃至下賤
之所遠離不欲共作知識迦葉如是沙門旃
陀羅亦為一切之所遠離所謂持戒有德人
所敬者比丘尼優婆塞優婆夷天龍鬼神及
乾闥婆知其破戒行惡法故迦葉是名沙門
旃陀羅迦葉如旃陀羅所有衣服飲食諸所
用物盡非好人之所愛樂亦不受用迦葉如
是沙門旃陀羅若有衣鉢所用之物皆是破
戒非法身口意業諛諂所得持戒沙門婆羅
門捨不愛樂亦不受用於此人所生哀愍心
迦葉是名沙門旃陀羅迦葉如旃陀羅以愧

Chart 2: Reconstructed layout of the original Chinese scroll of THT 552 + 554 + 2653

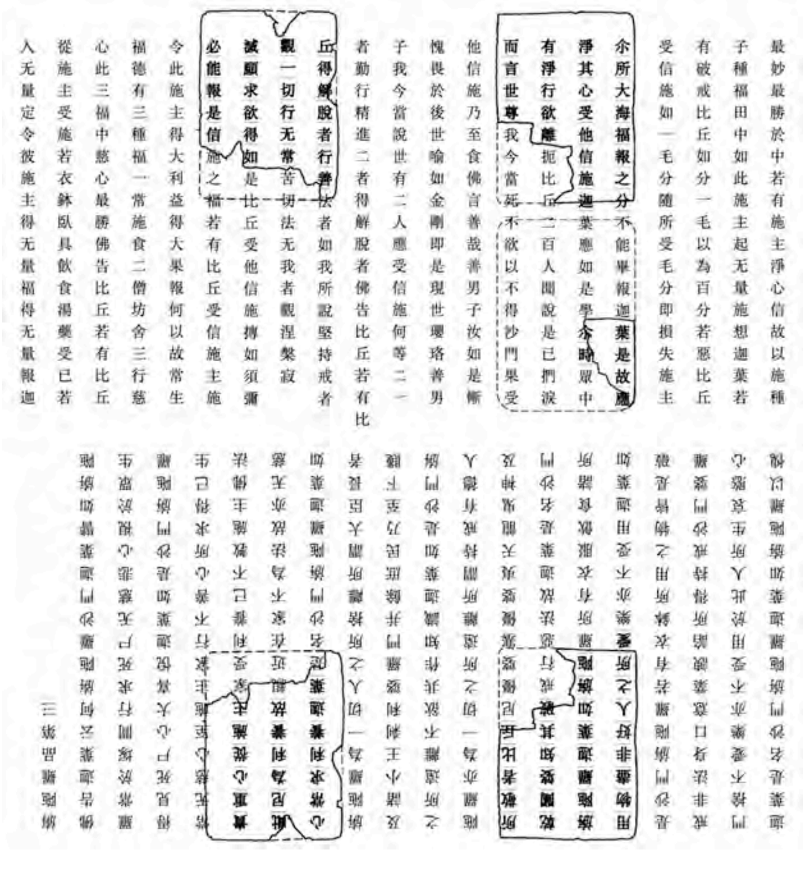
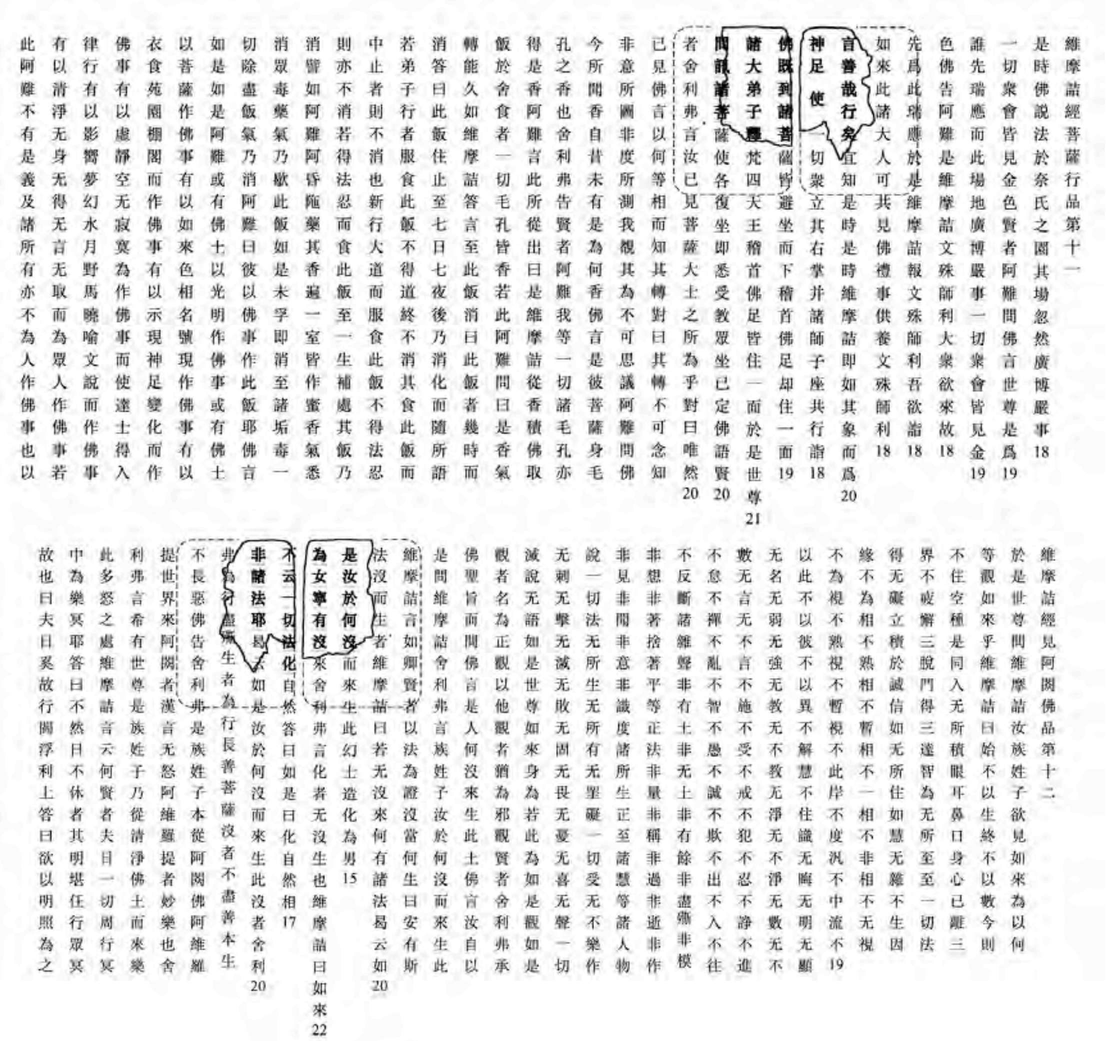

最妙最勝於中若有施主淨心信故以施種
子種福田中如此施主起无量施想迦葉若
有破戒比丘如分一毛以為百分若惡比丘
受信施如一毛分隨所受毛分即損失施主
尒所大海福報之分不能畢報迦葉是故應
淨其心受他信施迦葉應如是學尒時眾中
有淨行欲離扼比丘二百人聞說是已抆淚
而言世尊我今當死不欲以不得沙門果受
他信施乃至食佛言善哉善男子汝如是慚
愧畏於後世喻如金剛即是現世瓔珞善男
子我今當說世有二人應受信施何等二一
者勤行精進二者得解脫者佛告比丘若有比
丘得解脫者行善法者如我所說堅持戒者
觀一切行无常苦切法无我者觀涅槃寂
滅願求欲得如是比丘受他信施摶如須彌
必能報是信施之福若有比丘受信施主施
令此施主得大利益得大果報何以故常生
福德有三種福一常施食二僧坊舍三行慈
心此三福中慈心最勝佛告比丘若有比丘
從施主受施若衣鉢臥具飲食湯藥受已若
入无量定令彼施主得无量福得无量報迦

Chart 3: Reconstructed layout of the original Chinese scroll of THT 552 +554 + 2653 (with one of the sheets turned 180 degrees)

The preserved parts of the *Ratnarāśi* are located near the end of Chapter 1 and the beginning of Chapter 3, respectively (Chart 2). We can determine that the original Chinese scroll had approximately 17 characters per line. In order that the characters preserved inside the same Tocharian folio physically overlap, one of the two sheets was turned 180 degrees (Chart 3), flipped over vertically, and glued onto the other. The two-layered paper was then cut vertically into equal-sized elongated pieces measuring about 6,8 cm in width, which were, in their turn, cut in half horizontally. The reduced half was trimmed in the shape of a rounded rectangle. It becomes thus clear that THT 2653 was originally the lower right corner of the reduced half opposite to THT 552 b.

5.3. THT 556 + 557

The preserved parts of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* are located near the beginning of Chapter 11 and Chapter 12, respectively. The format of the original Chinese scroll seems to be different from that of the *Ratnarāśi*, with the number of characters per line fluctuating between 15 and 22, as reconstructible from the very fragmentary evidence. Although not all details are clear, it is plausible that THT 556 and 557 underwent more or less the same procedure as postulated above for THT 552 and 554 (Charts 4 and 5).



維摩詰經菩薩行品第十一
是時佛說法於奈氏之園其場忽然廣博嚴事18
一切衆會皆見金色賢者阿難問佛言世尊是爲19
誰先瑞應而此場地廣博嚴事一切衆會皆見金19
色佛告阿難是維摩詰文殊師利大衆欲來故18
先爲此瑞應於是維摩詰報文殊師利吾欲詣18
如來此諸大人可共見佛禮事供養文殊師利18
言善哉行矣宜知是時是時維摩詰即如其象而爲20
神足使一切衆立其右掌并諸師子座共行詣18
佛既到諸菩薩皆避坐而下稽首佛足却住一面19
諸大弟子釋梵四天王稽首佛足皆住一面於是世尊21
問訊諸菩薩使各復坐即悉受教衆坐已定佛語賢20
者舍利弗言汝已見菩薩大士之所為乎對曰唯然20
已見佛言以何等相而知其轉對曰其轉不可念知
非意所圖非度所測我視其為不可思議阿難問佛
今所聞香自昔未有是為何香佛言是彼菩薩身毛
孔之香也舍利弗告賢者阿難我等一切諸毛孔亦
得是香阿難言此所從出曰是維摩詰從香積佛取
飯於舍食者一切毛孔皆香若此阿難問曰是香氣
轉能久如維摩詰答言至此飯消曰此飯者幾時而
消答曰此飯住止至七日七夜後乃消化而隨所語
若弟子行者服食此飯不得道終不消其食此飯而
中止者則不消也新行大道而服食此飯不得法忍
則亦不消若得法忍而食此飯至一生補處其飯乃
消譬如阿難阿昏陁藥其香遍一室皆作蜜香氣悉
消衆毒藥氣乃歇此飯如是未孚即消至諸垢毒一
切除盡飯氣乃消阿難曰彼以佛事作此飯耶佛言
如是如是阿難或有佛土以光明作佛事或有佛土
以菩薩作佛事有以如來色相名號現作佛事有以
衣食苑園棚閣而作佛事有以示現神足變化而作
佛事有以虛靜空无寂寞為作佛事而使達士得入
律行有以影響夢幻水月野馬曉喻文說而作佛事
有以清淨无身无得无言无取而為衆人作佛事若
此阿難不有是義及諸所有亦不為人作佛事也以

維摩詰經見阿閦佛品第十二
於是世尊問維摩詰汝族姓子欲見如來為以何
等觀如來乎維摩詰曰始不以生終不以數今則
不住空種是同入无所積眼耳鼻口身心已離三
界不疲懈三脫門得三達智為无所至至一切法
得无礙立積於誠信如无所住如慧无離不生因
緣不為相不熟相不暫相不一相不非相不无視
不為視不熟視不暫視不此岸不度汎不中流不19
以此不以彼不以異不解慧不住識无晦无明无顯
无名无弱无強无教无不教无淨无不淨无數无不
數无言无不言不施不受不戒不犯不忍不諍不進
不怠不禪不亂不智不愚不誠不欺不出不入不往
不反斷諸雜聲非有土非无上非有餘非盡彌非模
非想非非著捨著平等正法非量非稱非過非逝非作
非見非聞非意非識度諸所生正至諸慧等諸人物
說一切法无所生无所有无罣礙一切受无不樂作
无剩无槃无滅无敗无固无畏无憂无喜无聲一切
滅說无語如是世尊如來身為若此為如是觀如是
觀者名為正觀以他觀者猶為邪觀賢者舍利弗承
佛聖旨而問佛言是人何沒來生此土佛言汝自以
是問維摩詰舍利弗言族姓子汝於何沒而來生此
維摩詰言如卿賢者以法為證沒當何生曰安有斯
法沒而生者維摩詰曰若无沒來何有諸法曷云如20
是汝於何沒而來生此幻士造化為男15
為女寧有沒來舍利弗言化者无沒生也維摩詰曰如來22
不**云一切法化**自然答曰如是曰化自然相17
非諸法耶曷云如是汝於何沒而來生此沒者舍利20
弗為行盡彌生者為行長善菩薩沒者不盡善本生
不長惡佛告舍利弗是族姓子本從阿閦佛阿維羅
提世界來阿閦者漢言无怒阿維羅提者妙樂也舍
利弗言希有世尊是族姓子乃從清淨佛土而來樂
此多怒之處維摩詰言云何賢者夫日一切周行冥
中為樂冥耶答曰不然日不休者其明堪任行衆冥
故也曰夫日奚故行閻浮利上答曰欲以明照為之

Chart 4: Reconstructed layout of the original Chinese scroll of THT 556 + 557

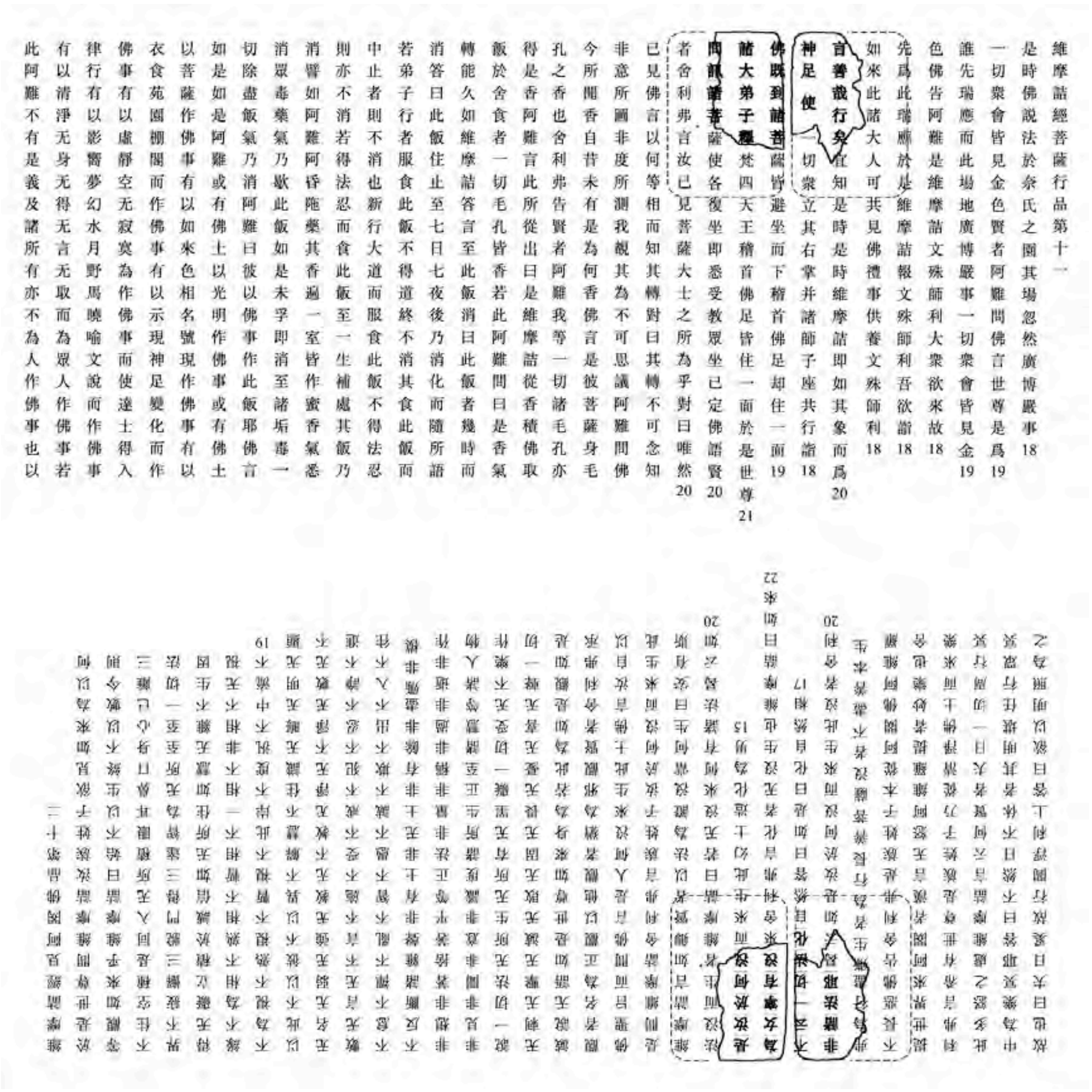


Chart 5: Reconstructed layout of the original Chinese scroll of THT 556 + 557
(with one of the sheets turned 180 degrees)

5.4. THT 1552 (incl. 520)

As is mentioned above, the fragments catalogued under THT 1552 are taken from a scroll of the *Vimaladattāparipṛcchā*, in which the number of characters is fluctuating a bit from line to line. Judging from the preserved Chinese characters, this scroll contained at least Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. In the case of the major fragment (i.e., THT 1552.1 = 520), the contours of the preserved parts exhibit symmetry about an axis, which is located amidst a succession of heptasyllabic verses towards the end of Chapter 4 (Chart 6). If the same holds true for the minute fragments (i.e., THT 1552.2 = 1552b–e), the Chinese characters preserved there would also form a symmetrical pair around a different axis (Chart 7). In all likelihood, the scroll, in a rolled-up state, was initially cut in half horizontally. Once unrolled, both the upper half and the lower half were cut into a certain number of elongated pieces of varying lengths. Each of these was then folded in half with its two halves pasted together to form a two-layered sheet, which, in its turn, was cut vertically into equal-sized rounded folios (the number of rounded folios depended on the length of the elongated piece).

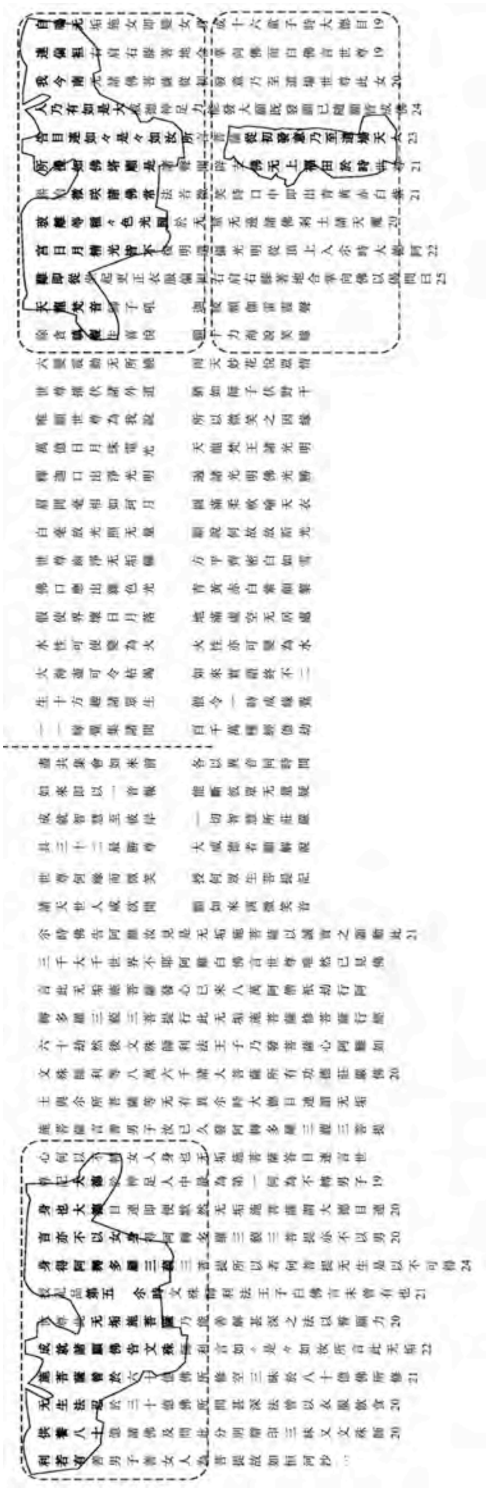


Chart 6: Reconstructed layout of the original Chinese scroll of THT 1552.1 ＝ 520

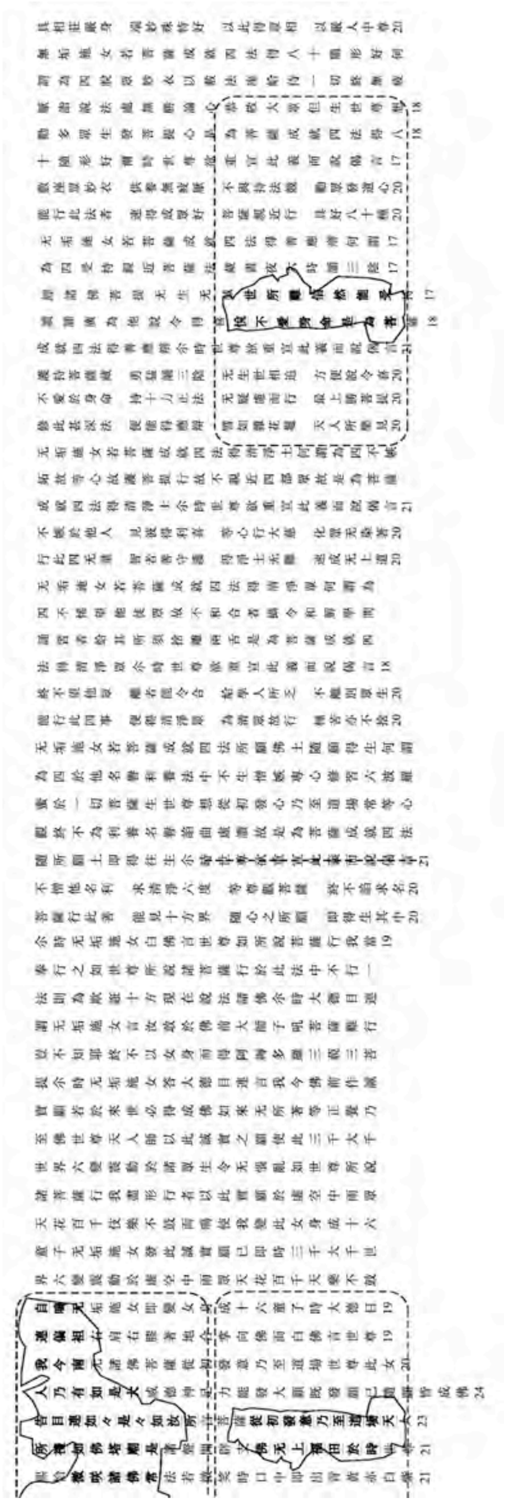


Chart 7: Reconstructed layout of the original Chinese scroll of THT 1552.2 ＝1552b–e

5.5. Different Means, Same End

The four groups of fragments, as demonstrated above, testify to three different ways of creating Tocharian folios out of Chinese sheets. Despite all the differences in implementation, they exemplify, in overall terms, the same type of procedure, in which the laminating of two paper sheets preceded the cutting of the paper to size. This is referred to below as the 'Baker' type, inasmuch as it resembles the way in which a baker deals with a sheet cake, cutting it into individual portions.

In addition, evidence for the other type of procedure is found in three delaminated Tocharian fragments from Shorchuk, i.e., THT 559.1, 559.2, and 560. All three fragments are trimmed from a scroll of Kumārajīva's translation of the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (T.286), which seems quite archaic in the light of its palaeography.[63] The Chinese characters written on THT 559.2 and 559.1, which are the *verso* and *recto* of the folio numbered 93 in the Tocharian poṭhī, constitute two neighbouring passages, separated only by one line, in the context of the original Chinese scroll;[64] THT 560, whose Tocharian side is located in the immediate vicinity of THT 559, carries a passage about five lines below.[65] Therefore, what seems to have happened in the first place is that the scroll was cut vertically into pairs of equal-sized elongated pieces. Thereafter the two members of every pair, with one of them flipped over horizontally, were sewn onto each other[66] so that the pairs of pieces turned into two-layered folios. Such a procedure of tailoring and sewing is reminiscent of quilting, and thus represents what may be termed the 'Tailor' type.

To sum up, the mechanisms for transforming Chinese scroll into Tocharian poṭhī, as far as known to date, can be classified into two types, i.e., the 'Baker' type and the 'Tailor' type. In Chart 8, we present a synopsis of the two types of procedure, lettered B and T respectively, while illustrating the examples with flow diagrams based on the above reconstruction.

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[63] See Chen 2019, 246, 247–248.

[64] For the counterparts of the Chinese passages in the Taishō edition, see T.286, 10.507b27–c4 (= THT 559.2) and 507c5–11 (= THT 559.1); exactly 18 characters are missing in between.

[65] For its counterpart in the Taishō edition, see T.286, 10.507c16–22 (= THT 560).

[66] The two layers of the Tocharian poṭhī encompassing THT 558–562 are not glued but sewn together, since remnants of stitches, on close scrutiny, are still visible on the left margin of the Tocharian side. This detail seems to have been overlooked by previous scholars; Sieg and Siegling (1953, 351) merely mentioned that the two layers were joined together ("zusammengesetzt"), without specifying how it was done.

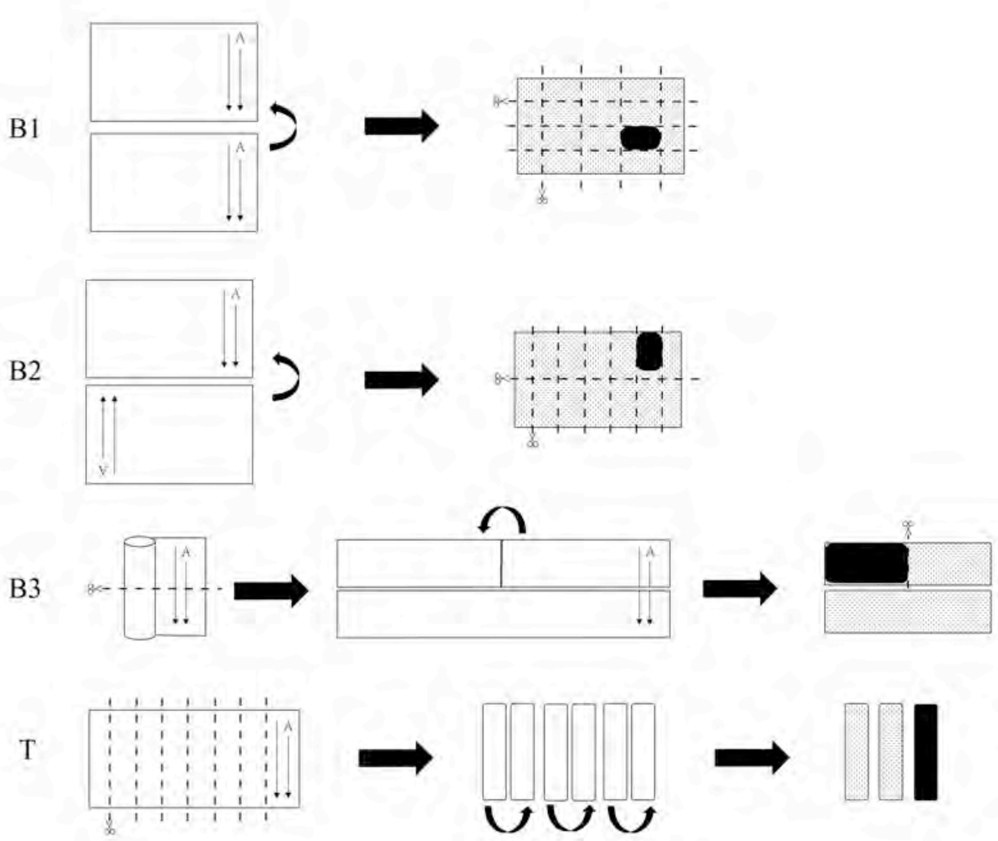

Chart 8: The ‘Baker’ type (B) and the ‘Tailor’ type (T)

6. Prospect for Future Research

This is a paper about small things. From the beginning until the end, our focus has been on some tiny vestiges of manuscripts, which are of such a miniature size that they can be easily held in the palm of the hand. At first glance, they may seem petty and insignificant, as if there were no difference between them and ordinary Tocharian fragments, often considered fossils of deserted oasis kingdoms that had fallen into oblivion along with hazy memories of the Buddhist past of the Tarim Basin. We argue that this is not the case, and that the fragments are richer in content than has been hitherto assumed. That they are underappreciated is, in the main, due to the fact that previous scholars overlooked a pivotal aspect of those written artefacts, namely their physical compositeness. To come to terms with the multilayered character of manuscripts such as those treated above is the first step to do justice to their materiality and the cross-cultural dynamics that shaped them. In this sense, what is presented above is but the tip of an iceberg. A thorough search through the major collections of manuscripts found in the Tarim Basin may well yield more examples of this codicological type, though such an ambitious investigation must best be undertaken within the framework of a large-scale project, since in each and every case what is necessary is careful physcial examination of each and every glass-encased manuscript fragment.

On the other hand, small things sometimes raise large questions. The decipherment of the hidden Chinese characters provides unprecedented insights into a distant world which is otherwise lost for good. For instance, more evidence is here presented for the pre-history of the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection, the study of which is currently faced with a historic opportunity under the auspices of an ERC project based in Leiden.[67] The case-study of the metamorphosis from Chinese scroll to Tocharian poṭhī likewise opens up new perspectives for the fluid and multifaceted manuscript cultures of Serindia, an informed synthesis of which remains a desideratum.[68] Meanwhile, many questions are still awaiting proper answers: Where did the Chinese Buddhist manuscripts come from? Why did they end up in the Tarim Basin? Was there any rationale behind the 'recycling' of the Chinese manuscripts? Were Chinese scriptures accorded a certain prestige by Tocharian-speaking Buddhists who did not read a single Chinese character? Did the Chinese-turned-Tocharian manuscripts serve a special purpose? Were Tocharian Buddhists even aware of the inner contents of these manuscripts? Was there ritualised burial of sacred texts? We shall attempt tentative answers to some of those questions in a future article.

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Appendix: Tocharian Fragments Joined Together

Figure App. 1: THT 553 b + 1588c
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Figure App. 3: THT 1588a + b + d + e
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Figure App. 5: THT 1552.1 b = 520 b (below) and THT 1552.2 = 1552b + c + d + e, side β (above)

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[67] See Silk's constribution in the present issue.

[68] Such a synthesis will have much to benefit from and contribute to the recent interdisciplinary, cross-cultural discussions on composite and multiple-text manuscripts. For a useful survey of the state of the art with methodological reflections, see Friedrich and Schwarke 2016, 1–26. For a case-study focused on codices and concertinas from Dunhuang, see Galambos 2020, 23–84.

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Figure 1: THT 553 + 555, normal (above), transmitted light (middle), and colour separation through red filter (below).
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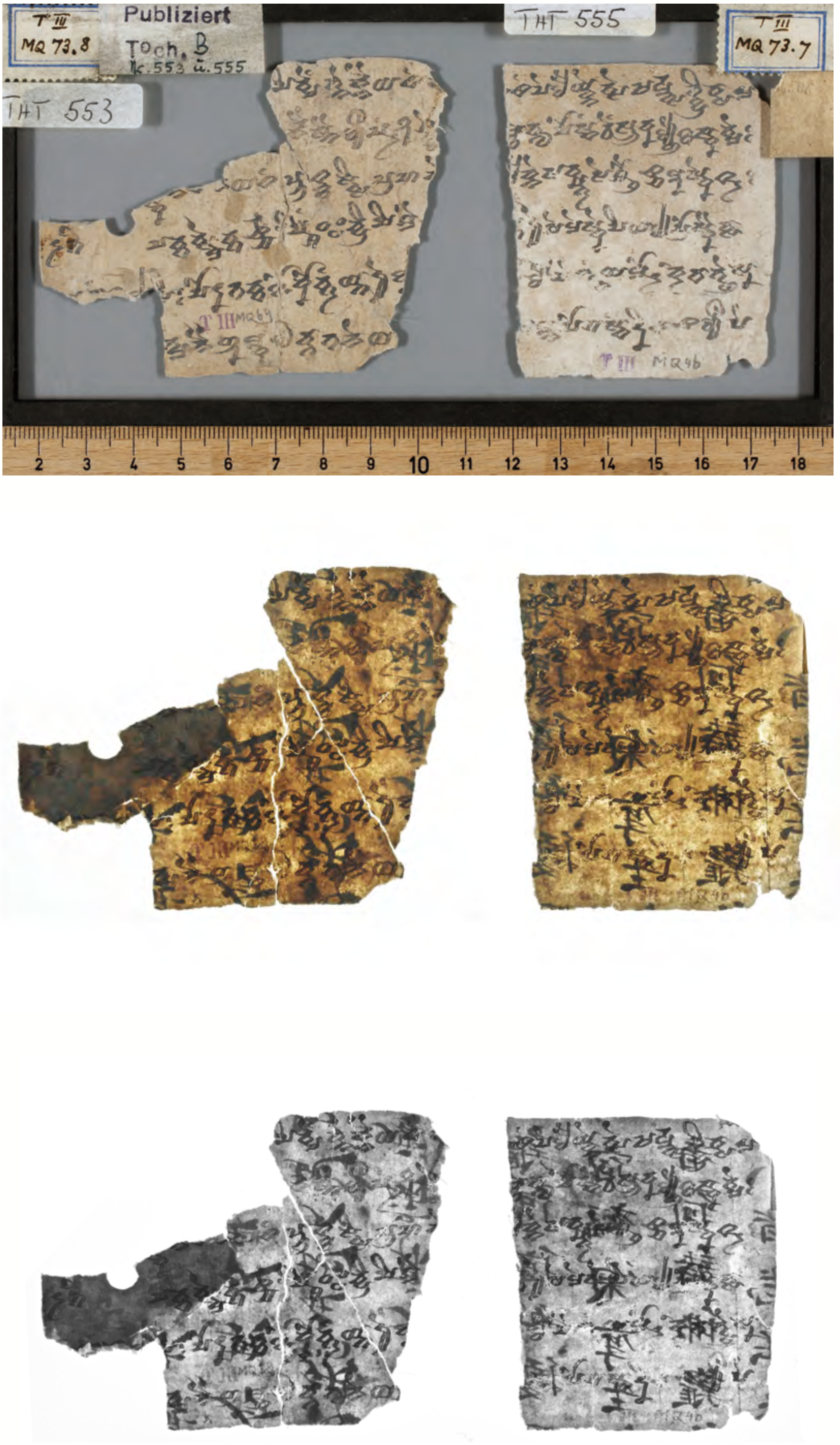


PLATE 6

Figure 2: THT 1588. © Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz/Photograph

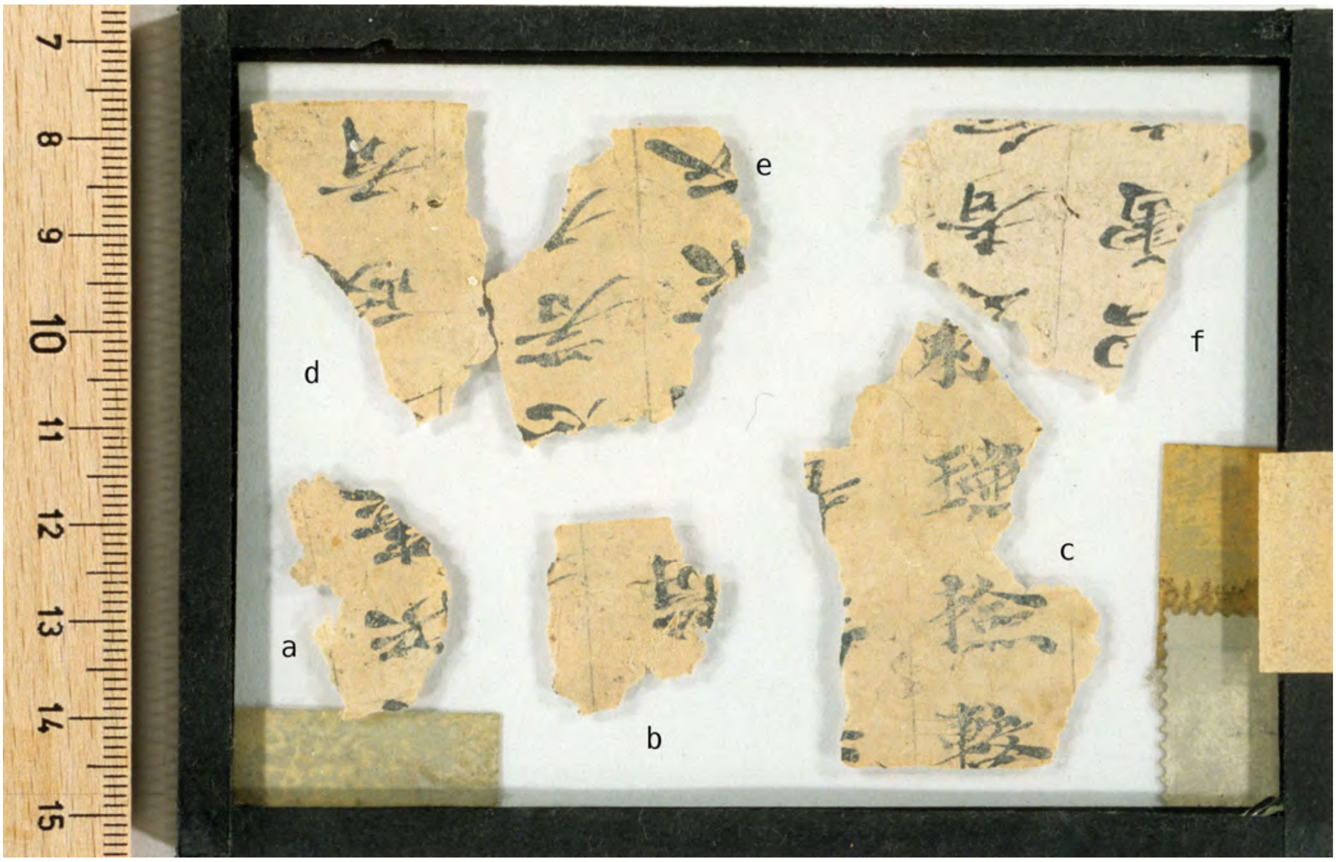


Figure 3: THT 553’: 1588c + the strip near string-hole on THT 553

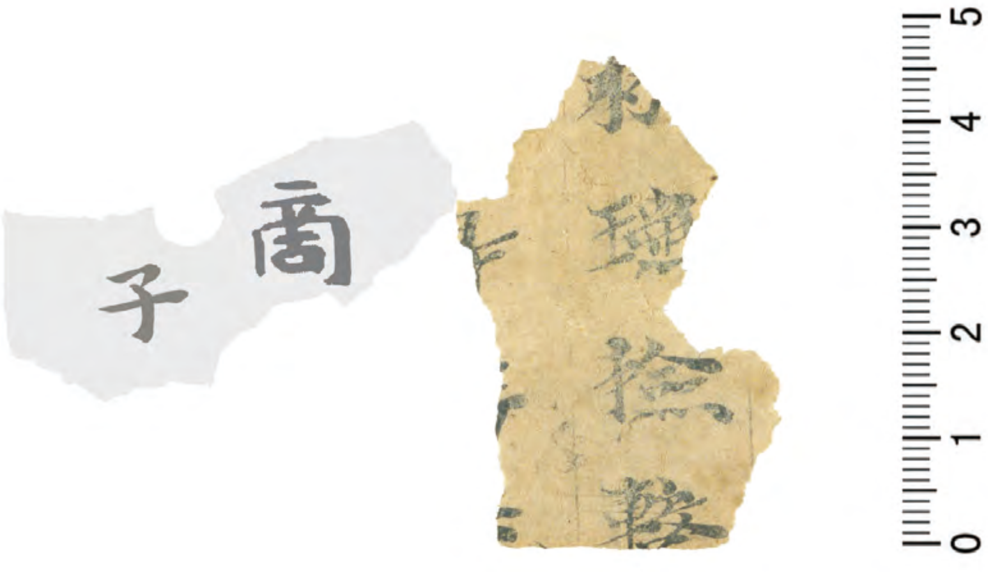


Figure 4: THT 553 with the part near string-hole restored

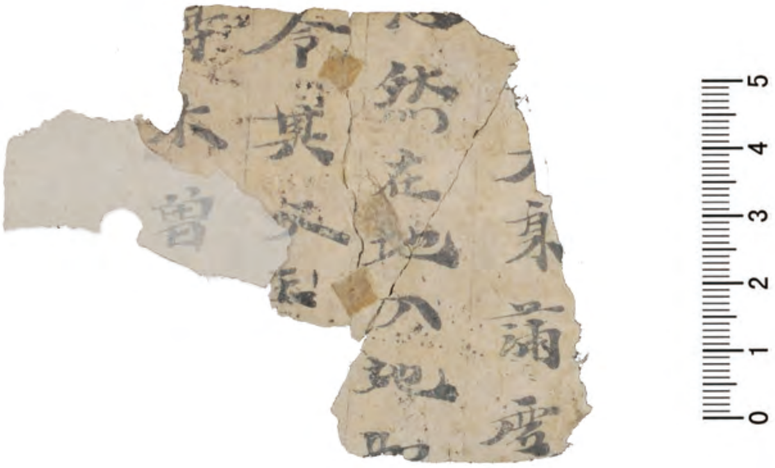


Figure 5: THT 555 + 1588f

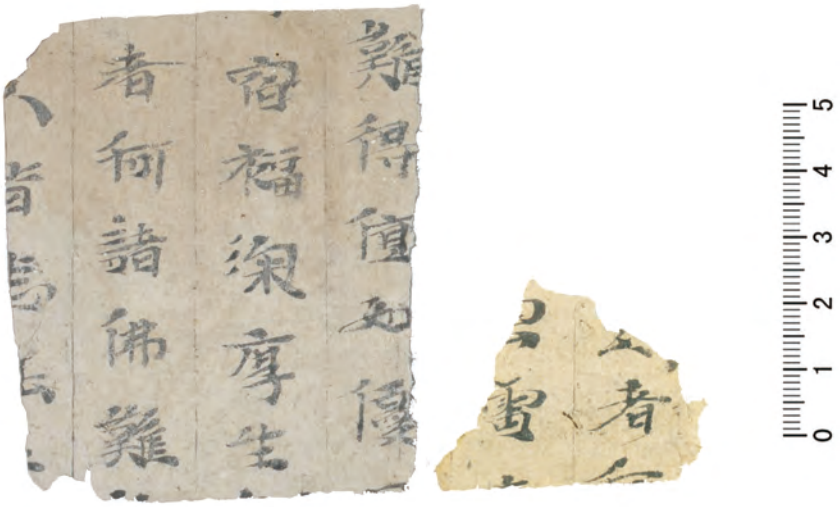


Figure 6: THT 555’: 1588a, b, d, e + mirror images on THT 555 (reproduced in dashed gray)

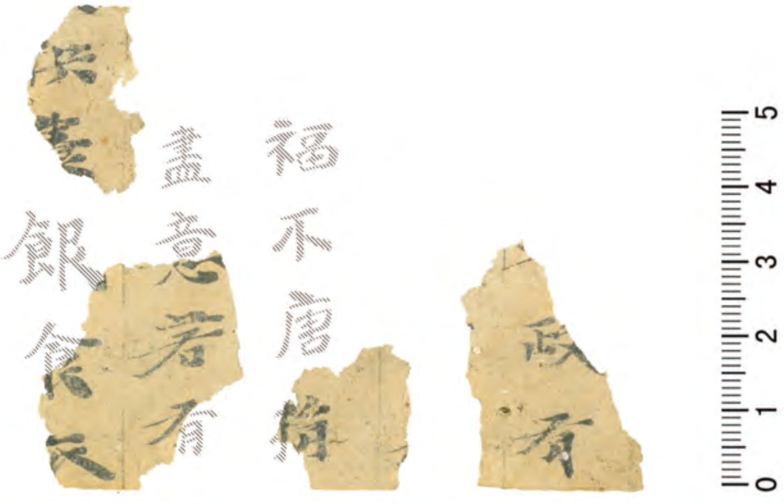


PLATE 8

Figure 7: THT 552 a, normal (above), transmitted light (middle), and colour separation with red filter (below).
© Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz/Photograph

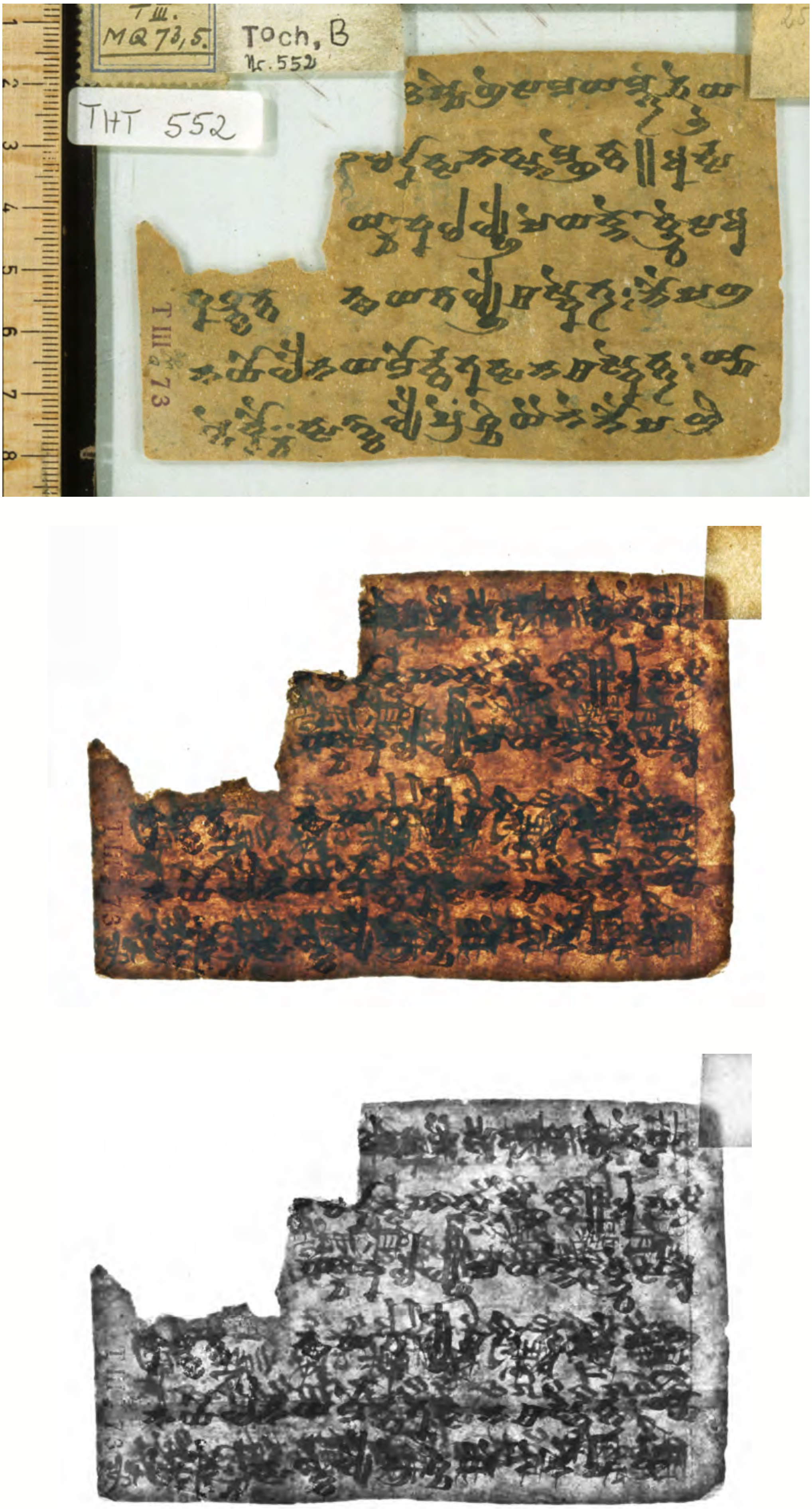


Figure 8: THT 554 a, normal (above), transmitted light (middle), and colour separation with red filter (below).
© Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz/Photograph

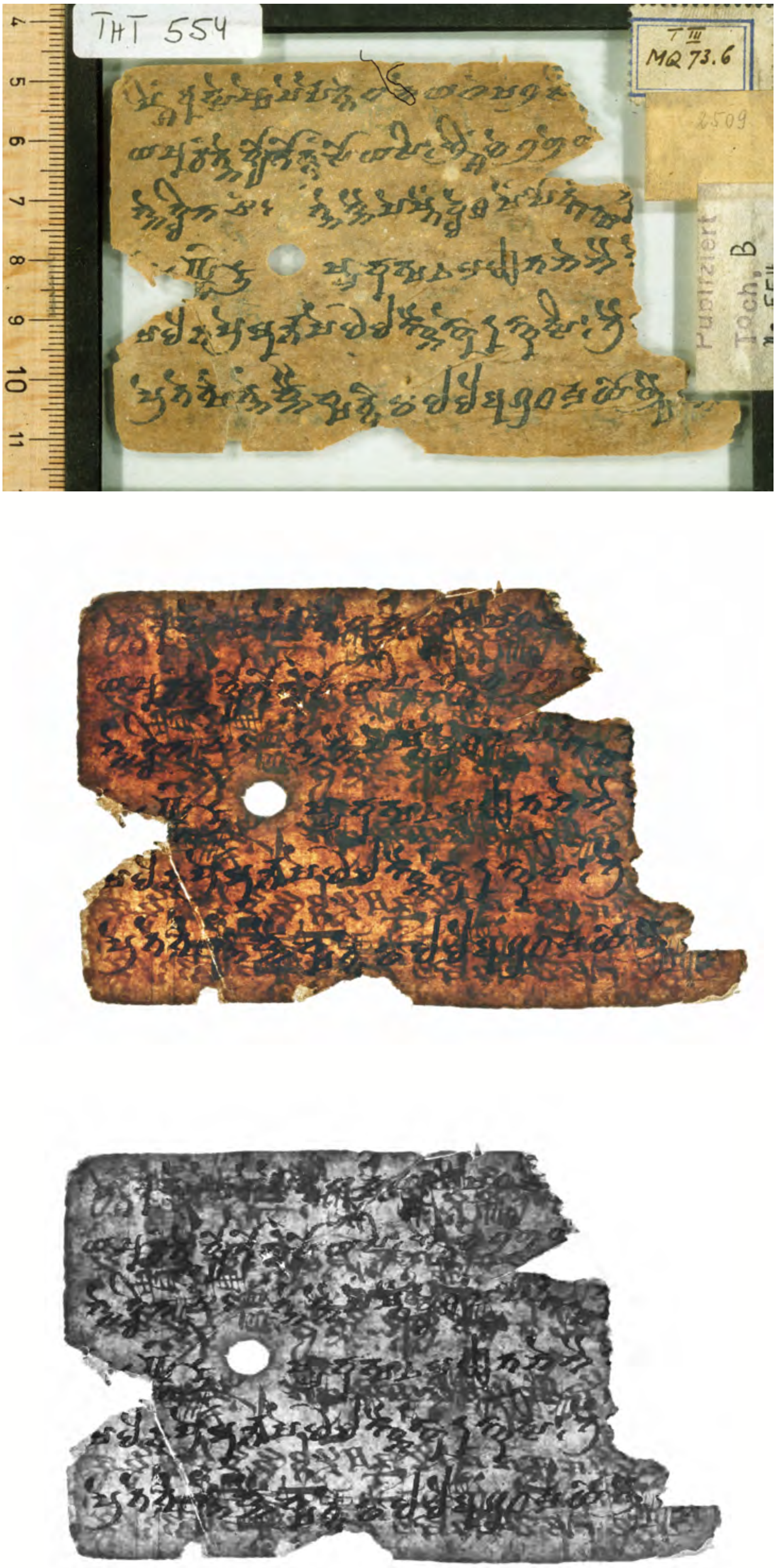


PLATE 10

Figure 9: Restored image of THT 552 a + 552 b

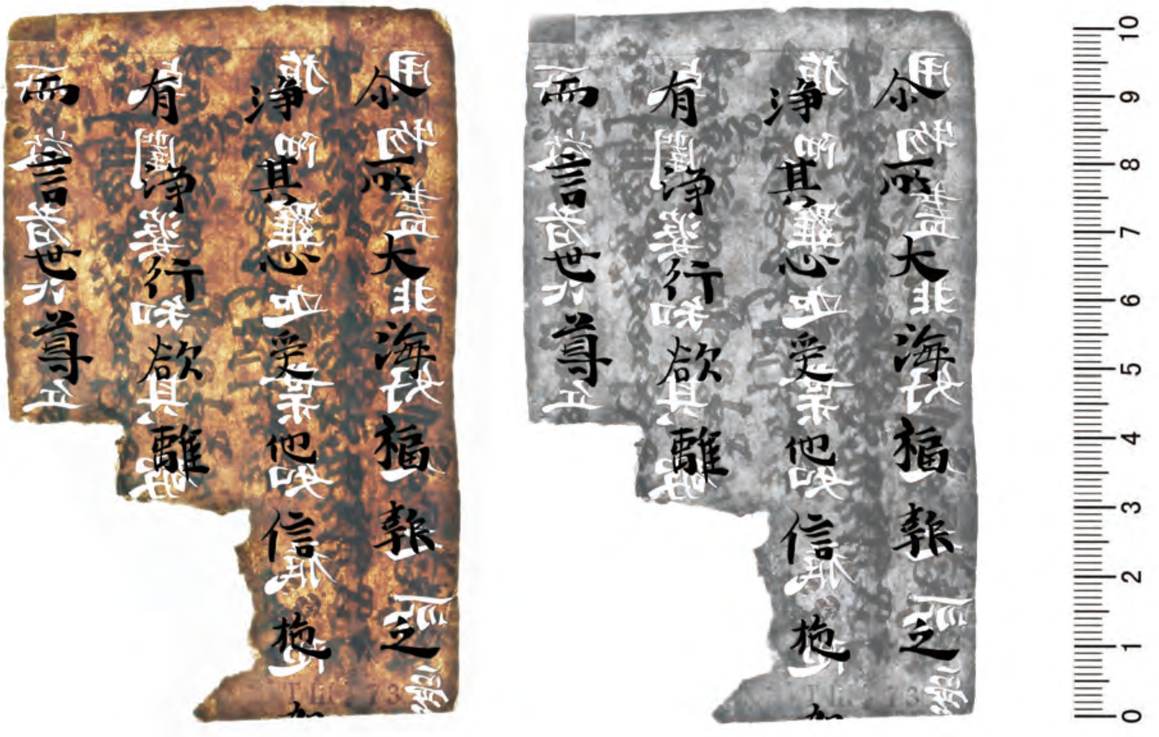


Figure 10: Restored image of THT 554 a + 554 b

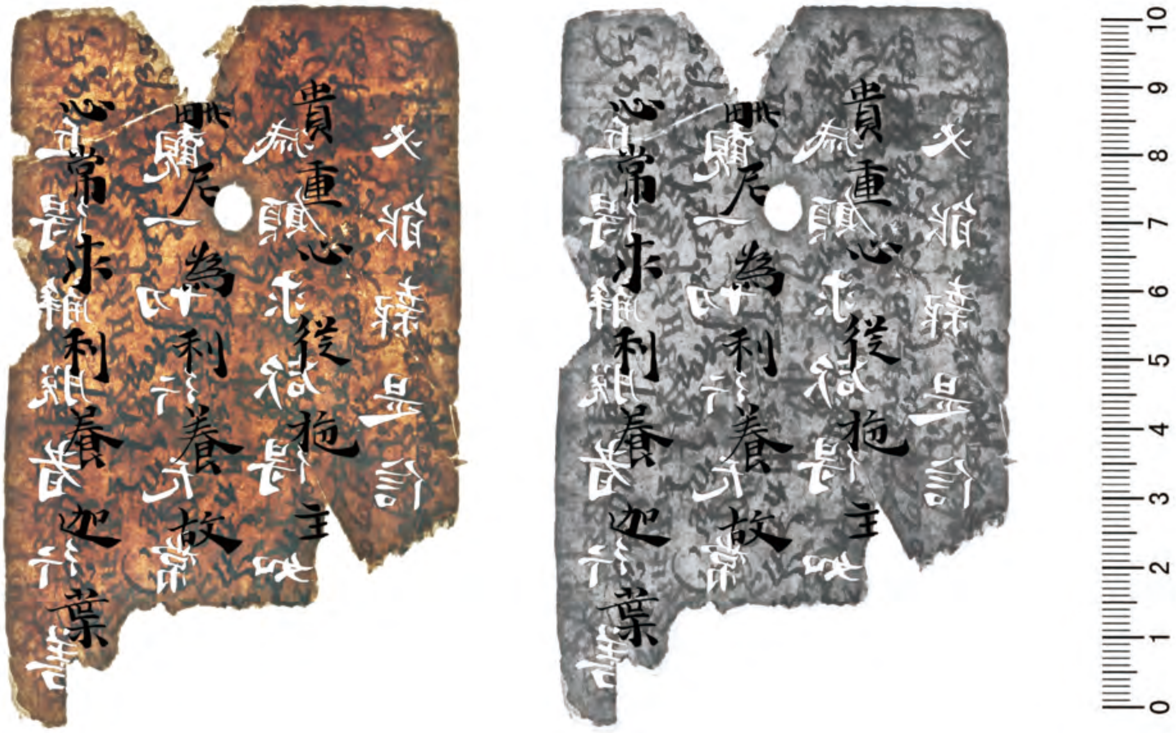
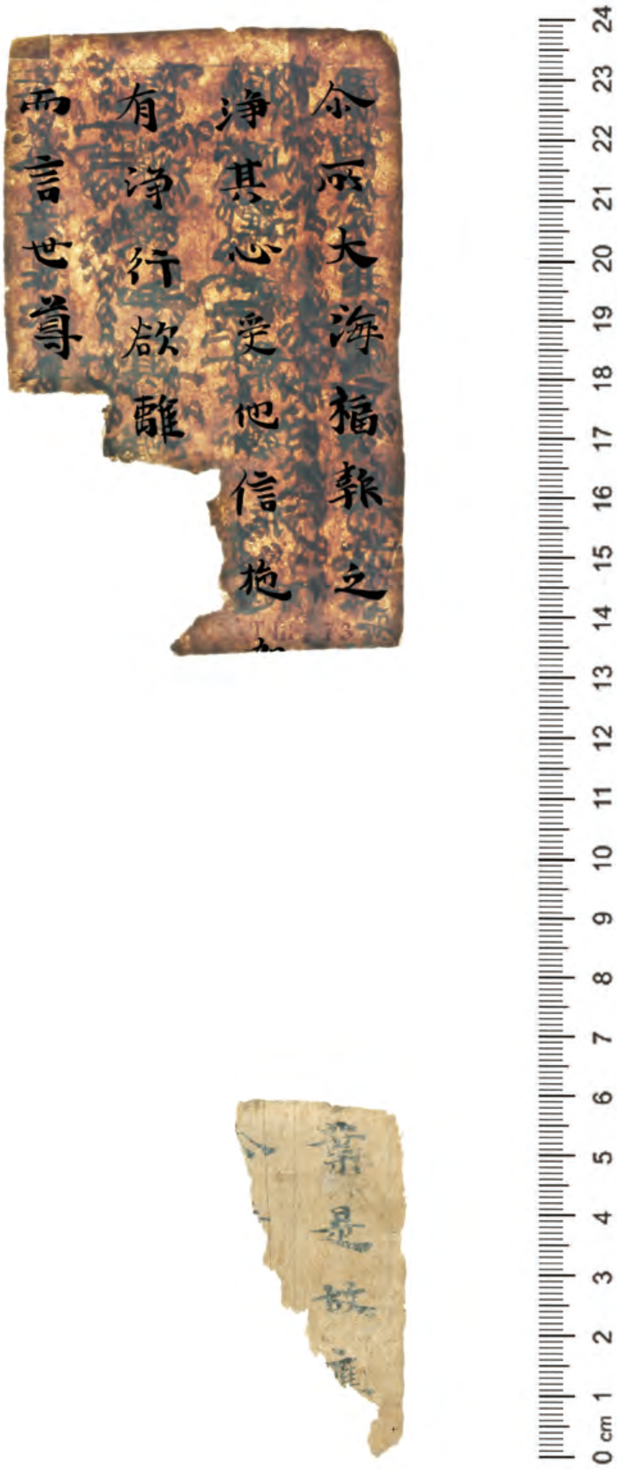


Figure 11: Restored image of THT 552 b + 2653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淨其心受他信施
有淨行欲離
而言世尊
0 cm 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

PLATE 12

Figure 12: THT 556 a + 557 a, normal (left), transmitted light (right), and colour separation through red filter (below).
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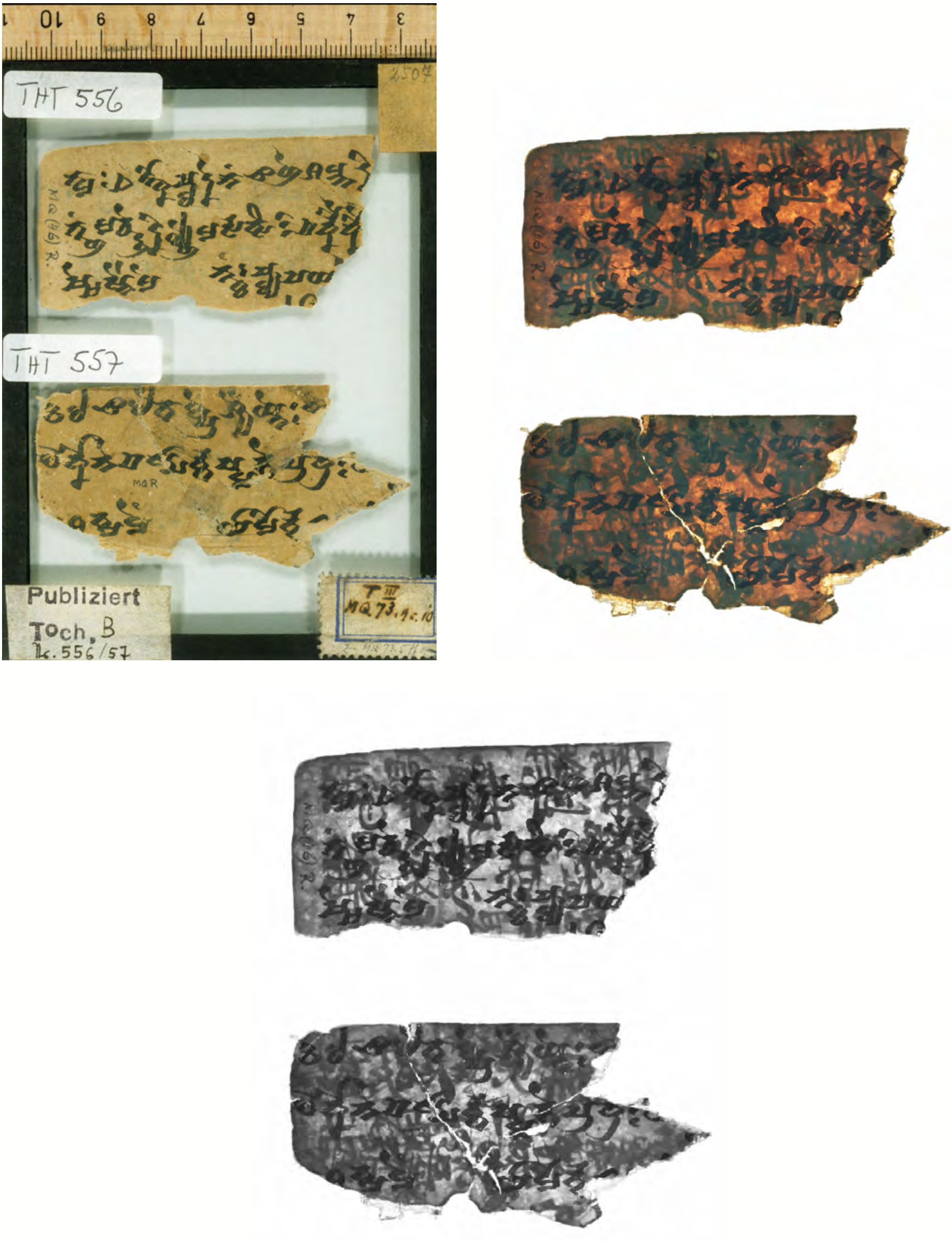

Figure 13: Restored image of THT 556 a + 556 b

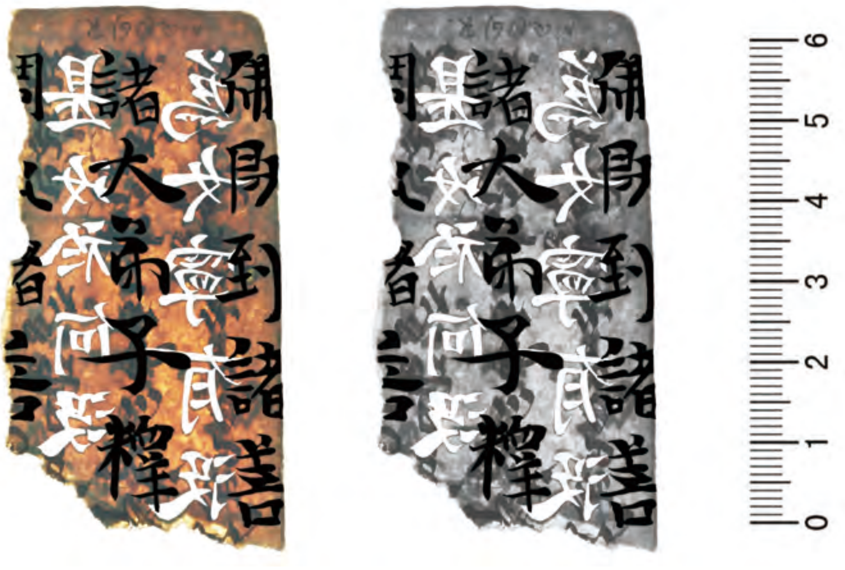

Figure 14: Restored image of THT 557 a + 557 b

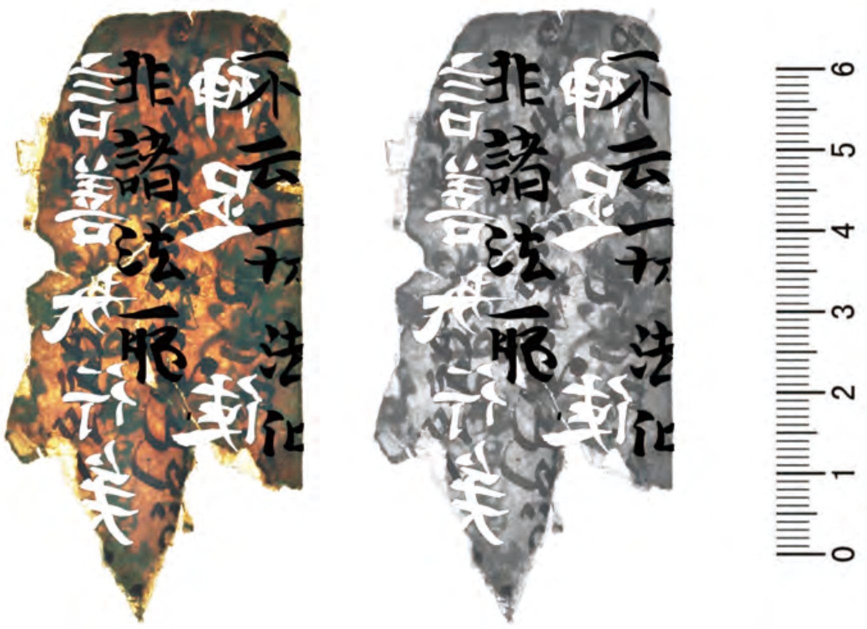

PLATE 14

Figure 15: THT 1552, normal (above), transmitted light (middle), and colour separation through red filter (below).
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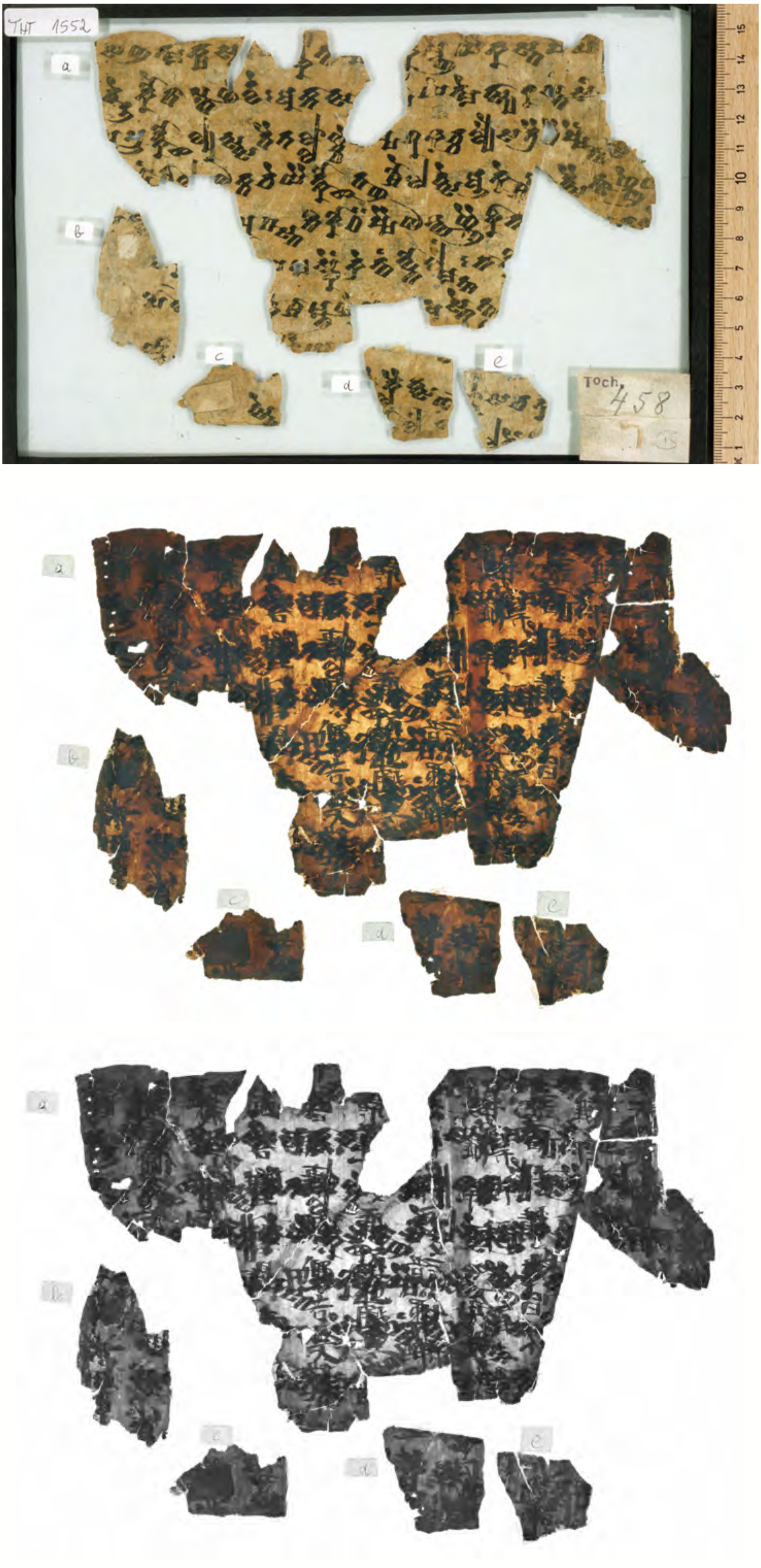

Figure 16: Restored image of THT 1552

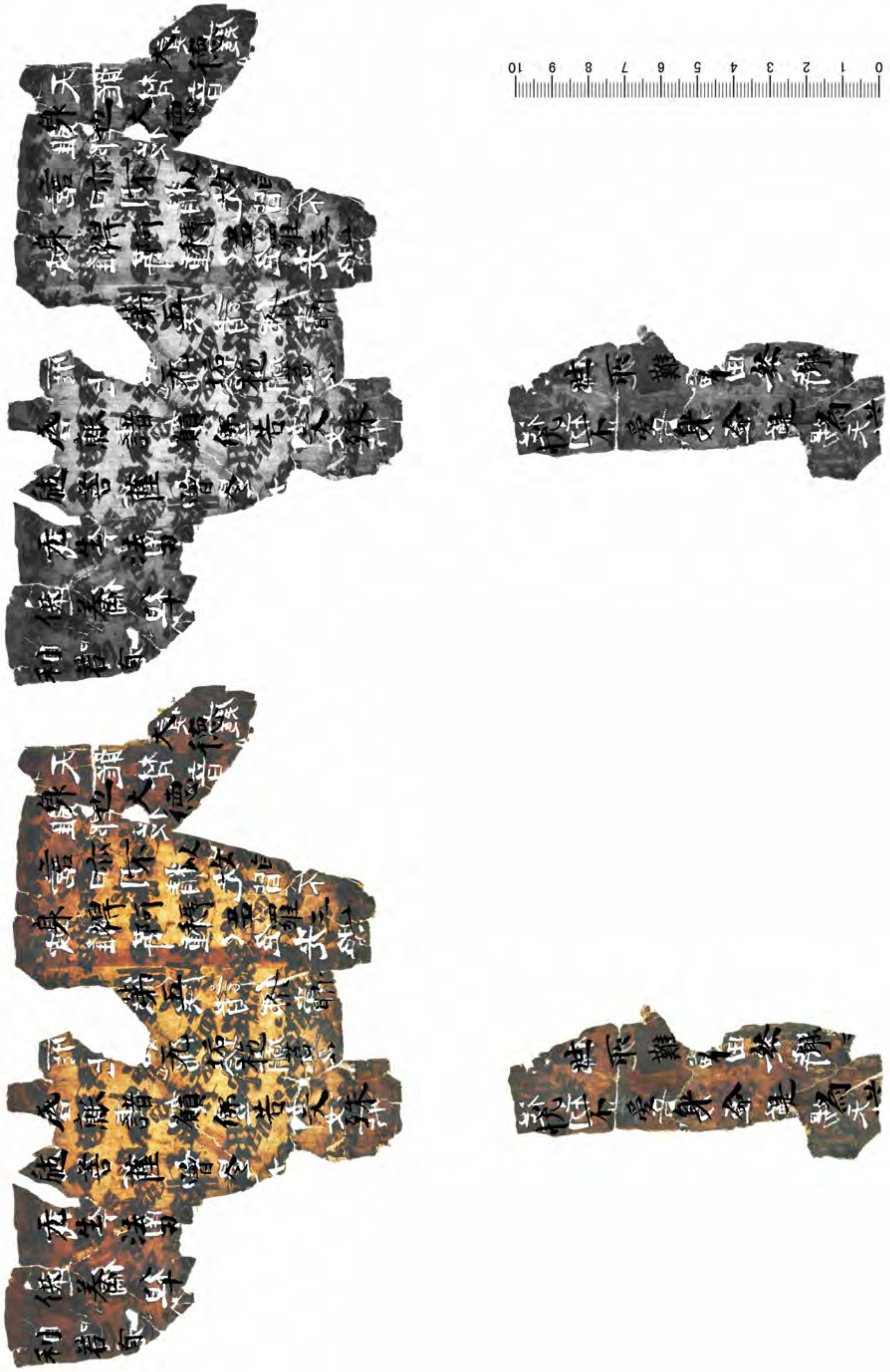

PLATE 16

Figure App. 1: THT 553 b + 1588c

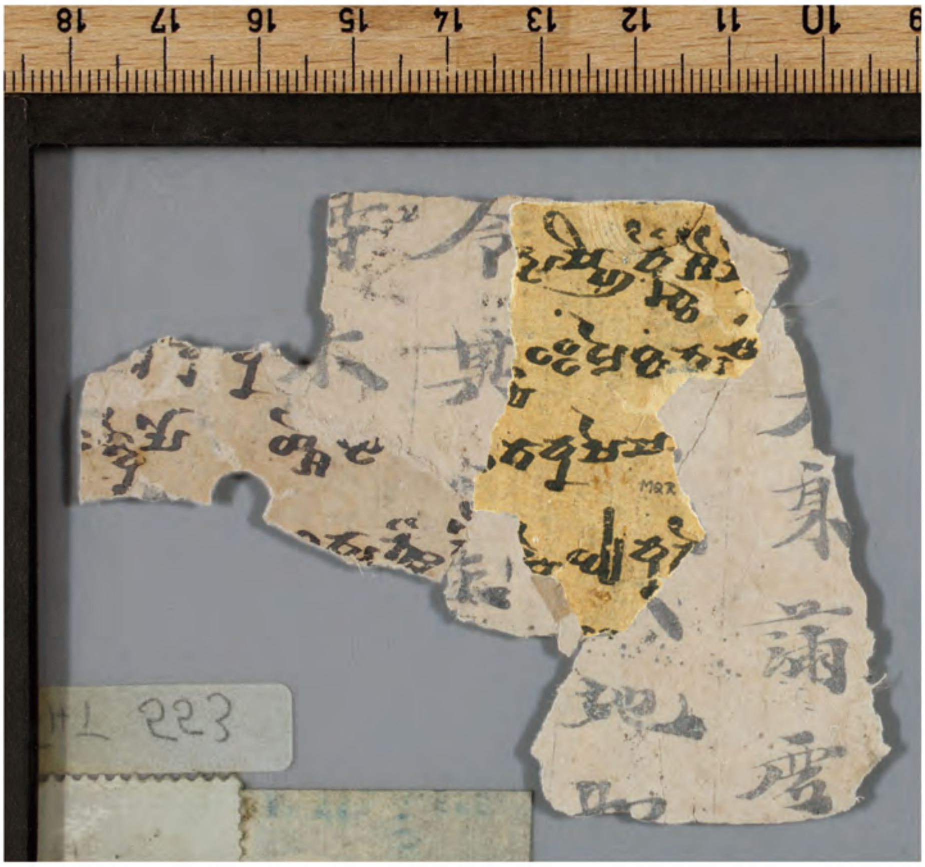

Figure App. 2: THT 555 a + 1588f

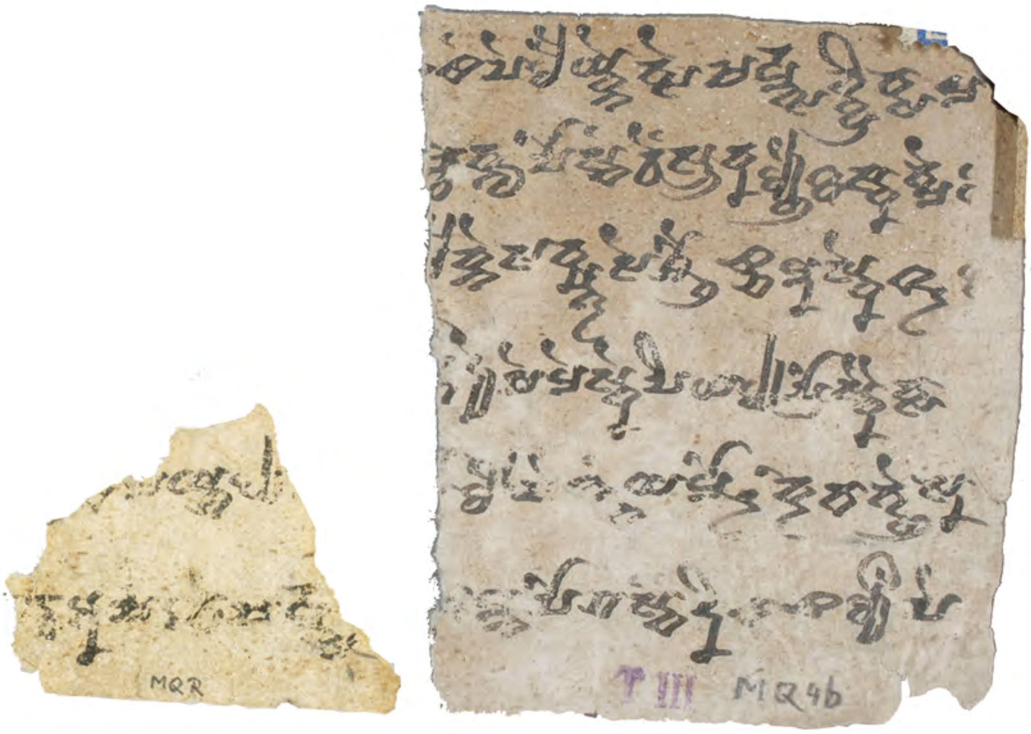
MQR
T III MQ 46

Figure App. 3: THT 1588a + b + d + e

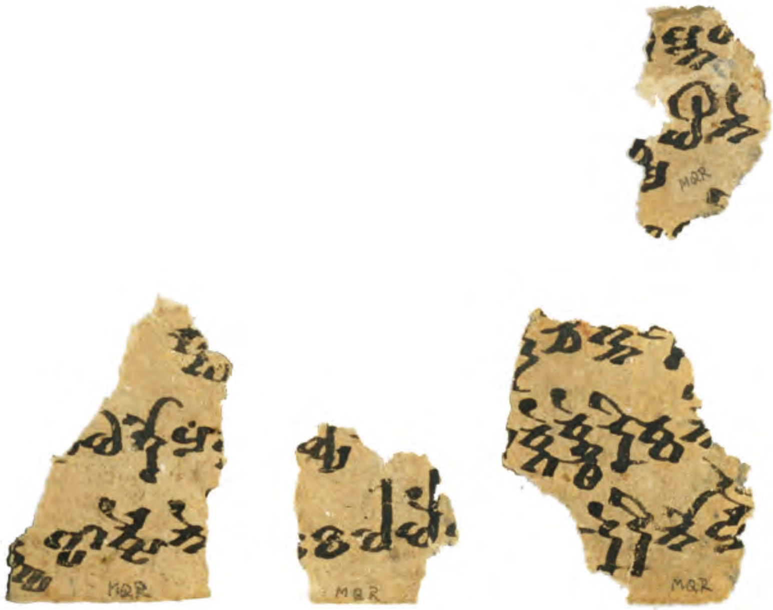

Figure App. 4: THT 1552.1 a = 520 a (above) and THT 1552.2 = 1552b + c + d + e, side α (below)

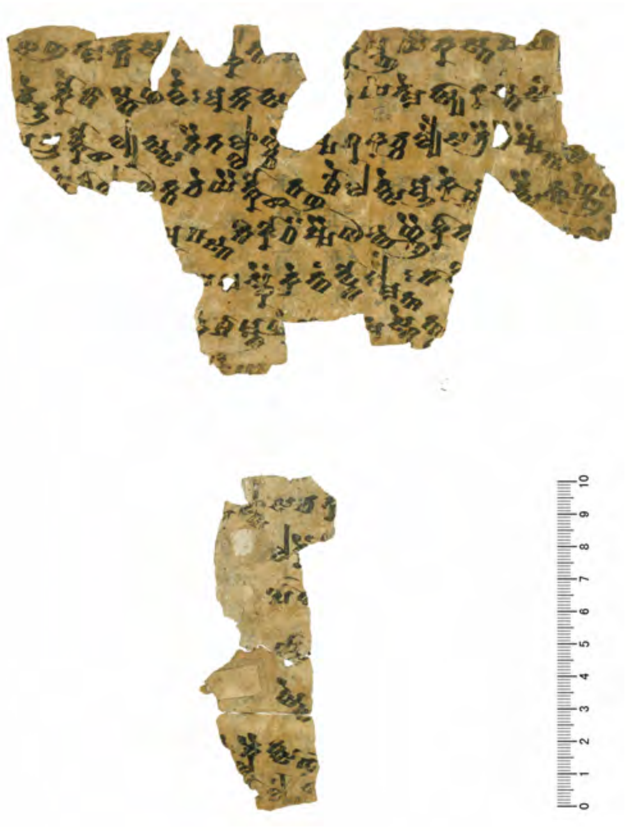

Figure App. 5: THT 1552.1 b = 520 b (below) and THT 1552.2 = 1552b + c + d + e, side β (above)